PAULICIANS

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The Paulicians

Heresy, Persecution and Warfare on the Byzantine Frontier, c.750–880

By

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Preface

It was sometime in December 2013 that a jaded Masters student in St Andrews turned to the Paulicians in what then seemed a fruitless quest for a research proposal. These were not auspicious beginnings and the almost total neglect of the topic for decades did not bode well, but it soon transpired I had stumbled upon a topic that occupied a fascinating place in the history of Christian dissidence. By the time of my PhD viva in Nottingham four and a half years later, I differed from the received wisdom on the nature of Paulician belief, its relationship with earlier and later heresies, and the sources that described it. Above all, it had become clear that existing work on the subject did not adequately reflect the concerns of the 21st century and had not benefited from the methodological and historiographical advances which had transformed the study of medieval and late antique heresy on the one hand and the field of Byzantine Studies on the other. In short, it was impossible to do full justice to the topic without tackling all facets of the heresy as a totality and presenting this in a way that resonated in the contemporary world. This book is a direct result of those aims.

It should be acknowledged at the outset that there is a tension between these motivations: revisionism and readability are not easy bedfellows after all. The topic is a difficult one whose complexities I have not sought to downplay. Instead, my approach throughout has been to signpost the relevance of the topic to related fields and matters of contemporary interest in order to provoke further discussion and, hopefully, place the Paulicians centre stage amid the compelling debates surrounding religious deviance in the ancient and medieval worlds. The reader, as always, will be the judge of my success. Besides this general proviso, a few editorial decisions require attention. I am a specialist in neither Armenian nor Islamic studies and, while I have attempted to employ consistent notation throughout, some inconsistencies undoubtedly remain. In the case of Greek names, I have preferred to remain true to the original unless the anglicised form is in common usage. Given the linguistic requirements and recent obscurity of the topic, I have cited accessible translations wherever these are available. The applicability of the label 'Byzantines' to the inhabitants of the Roman Empire in the East has been a recurring feature of debate in recent years, mainly in regard to the extent of the endurance of its Roman traditions and the transformative potentialities of its evolving Christian identity. Our sources consistently call the populace of this polity 'Romans' and I am generally in favour of acknowledging this identity wherever possible, but it seemed pedantic to dispense with the term Byzantine altogether, particularly

in a work which seeks to build bridges with those outside the field. Since there are minimal possibilities for confusion in what follows with either Rome itself or the Carolingians who also claimed a Roman inheritance, I have used the terms Byzantine and Roman interchangeably throughout.

As is inevitable with such a protracted project, my debts are legion. The foremost thanks are due to my PhD supervisors Mary Cunningham and Claire Taylor, whose patience, expertise, and understanding resulted in that rarest of things: an academically stressless doctoral degree. Next is Tim Greenwood, who deftly managed the hapless Masters student they inherited. Any errors which remain herein stem from my belligerent enthusiasm for the topic rather than any failings on their part. The underlying research would have been impossible without the funding provided by the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Midlands3Cities Doctoral Training Partnership, which supported me indefatigably at home and abroad during my PhD studentship. Further gratitude is due to my former PhD colleagues in the Department of History at the University of Nottingham and all those involved with the University of Birmingham's Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies, whose friendship and input enriched this book considerably. Special attention must be singled out for the late Ruth Macrides, a giant of her field whose intellectual brilliance was nevertheless dwarfed by the energy, style, and compassion she exuded as a human being. At Brill, the patient assistance of Marcella Mulder adroitly guided the project through the administrative labyrinth between draft proposal and end product. For support both personal and professional I owe gratitude to Stefanos Apostolou, Michele Baitieri, Camilla Bertini, Andy Fox, Matt Hefferan, Mirela Ivanova, Hugh Jeffery, Nik Matheou, Marco Panato, Maroula Perisanidi, Paz Ramírez, Chiara Ravera, Yulia Rozumna, Tom Sims, and Mariele Valci. Hollie Johnson and Jacqueline Cordell lived with this monster through its various mutations and may delight in its more apocalyptic or discursive moments. Finally, I owe the greatest thanks to my family, Elaine, Steve, Mark, Lauren, Evie, and Lennox, for indulging my inability to make conventional life decisions or take myself seriously. This book is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents, who would have understood very little of what follows, not least why anyone would want to attempt the endeavour in the first place, but would have proudly toasted its success over lunch in a Humberside pub nonetheless.

Figures

FIGURE 1 The persecution of the Paulicians under Michael I (*c.*811–813) in the Madrid Skylitzes. The three officials overseeing matters are on the left and the execution of the "Manichaeans" is on the right.
IMAGE TAKEN FROM THE HOLDINGS OF THE BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL DE ESPAÑA.

FIGURE 2 The battle of Lalakaon/Poson (863) in the Madrid Skylitzes. Petronas' victorious Byzantine forces are on the left and the army of 'Amr al-Aqṭa' is on the right. Although any Paulician presence at the battle remains conjectural, it marked a turning point in the fortunes of war on the eastern frontier.
IMAGE TAKEN FROM THE HOLDINGS OF THE BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL DE ESPAÑA.

Introduction

Throughout the 9th century, the Paulicians were invariably either the Byzantine Empire's most restless subjects or its most unlikely enemies. By the reign of the parvenu Basil I, decades of raiding had made their notoriety so great that the emperor shed pious tears as he fixed three arrows into the severed head of the Paulician leader Chrysocheir. Yet by the next decade, Diakonitzes, in whose faithful lap the stricken Chrysocheir had expired, led a Paulician contingent in southern Italy under imperial standards. At the century's outset, the chronicler Theophanes the Confessor complained bitterly about Emperor Nikephoros I's favour towards "the Manichaeans who are now called Paulicians" and noted his satisfaction when a volte face in policy led the later rulers Michael I and Leo V to persecute them with a severity not seen in the empire for centuries. A redux of this persecuting zeal under the empress regent Theodora led the Paulician Karbeas to take a radical step; forsaking his post in the imperial army, he allied himself with the Islamic Emirate of Melitene and established a raiding alliance against the empire that presaged the campaigns of his nephew Chrysocheir. In the 10th century, after the era of the great raids was over, they were still restive enough for Theodore II, Bishop of Antioch, to beseech John I Tzimiskes to remove them from his lands. This same emperor still felt they could be of use, however, and sought to harness their martial tenacity to hold down the empire's troublesome northern frontier. On the eve of the Crusades, Alexios I too sought their aid, this time against the invading Normans in Dalmatia, but after their hasty abscondment following the battle of Dyrrhachium his efforts were channelled into correcting their doctrinal eccentricities. Quite how unorthodox these beliefs were is up for debate. According to the testimony of ancients and moderns, theirs was a distinctly Christian brand of dualism which credited the genesis of the cosmos not to God the Father, who ruled only the heavenly realm, but to a second, malevolent deity; a teaching whose offshoots would bear blasphemous fruit among the Bogomils of Bulgaria and the Cathars of Lombardy and the Languedoc. Yet long after the inexorable Ottoman advance into the Balkans, the 18th-century traveller and letter-writer Mary Wortley Montagu wrote of Paulines in the old Paulician stronghold of Philippopolis, who proudly showed her the church at which they claimed the apostle Paul, their doctrinal inspiration, had once preached. An unusual claim perhaps, but hardly one that spurns the fundamentals of Christian faith.

Much of this history remains patchy, neglected, and obscure. Much of this history is not history at all, but embellishment, myth, or later polemic. Heresy was, and is, an emotive subject rarely conducive to objectivity or accuracy.

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Paulician narratives of their own history necessitate interpretive leaps which seem far-fetched today. In the account that remains to us, Constantine-Silvanos, the semi-legendary figure whom the Paulicians venerated as their first *didaskalos* (literally, a teacher), thought of Paul not as a long dead personage evoked only through the scriptures, but as a present reality, related to himself. To his students he said: "You are the Macedonians and I am Silvanos, who has been sent to you by Paul."[1] Echoes of Paul, his letters, his journeys, and the apostolic age suffuse the Paulician imagination: just as Constantine adopted the name Silvanos from one of Paul's disciples, so did his successors Symeon-Titos, Gegnesios-Timothy, Joseph-Epaphroditos, and Sergios-Tychikos. As Constantine termed his community at Kibossa the Church of the Macedonians, so did his successors establish and maintain the allegorically named churches of the Achaeans, the Philippians, the Laodikaeans, the Ephesians, and the Kolossians, all in succession to Paul's foundation at Corinth.[2] These communities ranged across much of northern and eastern Asia Minor, western Armenia, and the Islamic emirates of Melitene and Tarsus, thereby setting the scene which Karbeas, Chrysocheir, and their ilk would later wield to deadly effect. Quite how a religious movement founded on *didaskaloi* and churches metamorphosed into a military power is unclear: our sources are rather ambiguous on the point. In a similar vein, accounts of the earliest phases of Paulician activity are so stylised that they immediately raise suspicions. Constantine-Silvanos, stoned to death by his adoptive son, is more than reminiscent of the protomartyr Stephen, while his successor Symeon-Titos, the former imperial persecutor turned born-again convert, martyred for his new-found faith at the same spot as Constantine, is like a second incarnation of Paul himself. Only with the last Paulician *didaskalos* Sergios-Tychikos, who wrote pastoral letters with a distinctly Pauline verve, do we happen on a figure of certain historicity.

Paulician claims to an apostolic inheritance were known to the Byzantines, or, to use the name that both they and the Paulicians would have used, the Romans.[3] Peter of Sicily, a bloodthirsty writer even by the standards of medieval

1 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 101, ed. Denise Papachryssanthou, trans. Jean Gouillard, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 42–43. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 78.

2 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 163, pp. 60–61. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 88; *Treatise*, 7, ed. and trans. Charles Astruc, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), p. 84. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), pp. 93–94.

3 For recent remarks on Roman identity in the Byzantine Empire, or Romanía, see Ioannis Stouraitis, "Roman Identity in Byzantium: a Critical Approach," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 107:1 (2014), pp. 175–220; Ioannis Stouraitis, "Reinventing Roman Ethnicity in High and Late

polemicists, acknowledged that the *didaskalos* Sergios claimed to be a student of Paul, albeit while insisting that the Paulicians were actually none other than Manichaeans and, as such, merited the death penalty prescribed for these heretics under earlier Roman legal codes.[4] The later Roman writer Euthymios of the Peribleptos, while writing against the obscurely named Phundagiagitae, who are conventionally identified as Bogomils, noted that both they and the Paulicians claimed that Paul was their inspiration, yet he too alleged that both perverted his teaching into a dualist creed.[5] In other instances, heresiological texts are more reticent to link the Paulicians with the apostle. The *Treatise against the Paulicians*, our earliest surviving Byzantine source against the heresy, claims that they took their name from Paul, a resident of Samosata (Sumaysāṭ), who propagated the heresy with his brother John. When exactly this Paul is supposed to have lived is not apparent, although he bears an uncanny resemblance to the historical Paul of Samosata, the flamboyant Bishop of Antioch (260–268) who was driven from that city for his adoptionist views, that is, for believing that Christ was originally an ordinary mortal man until his adoption by the Father. The *Treatise*, however, immediately problematises the link with

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Medieval Byzantium," *Medieval Worlds* 5 (2017), pp. 70–94; Anthony Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome* (Cambridge, MA/London, 2015), pp. ix-xvi; Anthony Kaldellis, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA/London, 2019). For our period, see now Douglas Whalin, *Roman Identity from the Arab Conquests to the Triumph of Orthodoxy* (Cham, 2020).

4 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 87; 98, pp. 38–39; 40–43. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 75; 77; *Codex Iustinianus*, 1:5:11; 1:5:16, ed. Paul Krüger, *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1895), pp. 53; 55–56. Translation: *The Codex of Justinian: A New Annotated Translation*, trans. Fred H. Blume, ed. Bruce W. Frier, 3 vols, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 200–201; 208–211; *Ecloga: das Gesetzbuch Leons III. und Konstantinos' V.*, 17:52, ed. Ludwig Burgmann (Frankfurt, 1983), pp. 242–243. English translation: *The Laws of the Isaurian Era: The Ecloga and its Appendices*, ed. and trans. Michael T.G Humphreys (Liverpool, 2017), p. 77. Manichaeism was a dualistic religion founded by the Babylonian prophet Mani (*c.*216–274/77), who for some time gained a position of influence with the Sasanian Shahanshah Shapur I (*c.*240–270), before his downfall and eventual execution during the reign of Wahram I (either 271–274 or 274–277). His faith swiftly gained ground in Roman lands, but was fiercely persecuted from the time of Diocletian onward and was effectively extinct in the empire from the 6th century. It was likewise suppressed under the Sasanians and the Islamic caliphates, although it did remain a force in the lands between the Caspian Sea and the Tarim Basin into our period, particularly among the Soghdians and later the Uyghurs. See Nicholas J. Baker-Brian, *Manichaeism: An Ancient Faith Rediscovered* (London, 2011); Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China* (Manchester, 1985).

5 Euthymios of the Peribleptos, *Epistula*, in *Die Phundagiagiten: ein Beitrag zur Ketzergeschichte des byzantinischen Mittelalters*, ed. Gerhard Ficker (Leipzig, 1908), pp. 62–63. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 158.

Paul, remarking that the Paulicians anathematise both him and Mani, the other supposed founder of their belief, without hesitation.[6] An association with Paul of Samosata may not be entirely without merit – the Armenian diminutive 'the followers of the little Paul' (the literal meaning of the term Paulician or Paylikeank') may have denoted his followers in early Armenian texts – but it holds no discernible relevance to the Paulicians of 8th- and 9th-century Asia Minor.[7] The same is true of attempts to connect the name with the shadowy Paul the Armenian, a figure who never ranked among the Paulician *didaskaloi*, but still seems to have occupied an important role in their history. Ultimately, it seems that the association with the apostle Paul provides the best clue to their name. It must be stressed that the Paulicians did not use this moniker among themselves, however. A Byzantine witness states their preferred endonym clearly: "They call themselves Christians and us Romans."[8] Scholars have long puzzled over the origins of the Paulicians' name without reaching a clear consensus, but it is at least clear that the name – and the beliefs underlying it – occasioned dispute, misunderstanding, and animosity.

The same concerns arise repeatedly whenever Paulicians are encountered during our period. According to Paulician testimony, both Constantine-Silvanos and Symeon-Titos found martyrdom under the indefatigable gaze of imperial authorities and only quick thinking saved the later *didaskaloi* Gegnesios-Timothy and Joseph-Epaphroditos from the same fate. The latter, in fact, seems to have been harassed by both Byzantine and Islamic authorities at various stages of his career. Stylised and mythical the surviving version of these events may be, but the same is not true of the persecutions enacted and then halted by the vacillating Michael I (811–813) and reimposed under his successor Leo V (813–820).[9] This persecution fell heavily on the Armeniakon thema, whose

6 *Treatise,* 1–6, pp. 80–83. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 93. On Paul of Samosata, see Fergus Millar, "Paul of Samosata, Zenobia and Aurelian: the Church, Local Culture and Political Allegiance in Third-Century Syria," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971), pp. 1–17; Daniëlle Slootjes, "Bishops and Their Position of Power in the Late Third Century CE: The Cases of Gregory Thaumaturgus and Paul of Samosata," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 4:1 (2011), pp. 100–115.

7 The spellings of the term vary somewhat in Armenian. For the differences, see Vrej Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement: Religious Movements in the Armenian Church from the Fourth to the Tenth Centuries* (London, 1987), p. 12.

8 *Treatise,* 9, p. 85. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 94.

9 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, ed. Carl de Boor, 2 vols, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1883), p. 494, l. 31 – p. 495, l. 15. English translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, eds. and trans. Cyril Mango, Roger Scott (Oxford, 1997), p. 678; Theodore the Stoudite, *Theodori Studitae epistulae*, *Ep.* 94, ed. Georgios Fatouros, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1992), p. 214; Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 175, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 90.

name, contrary to what might be expected, does not necessarily connote significant Armenian settlement.[10] Armenian links were, however, clearly key to the movement's origins – besides the origins of their name, the earliest sites associated with them in imperial territory correlate well with migration routes from Armenia, but it is simplistic to view them as quintessentially Armenian. Leo V was himself known as 'the Armenian', yet he renewed their persecution.[11] Paulician and Armenian identities did not overlap exactly, but instead attest a more complex set of communal dynamics.

A similar complexity applies to the relationship between the Paulicians and the iconoclast controversy, or, to use the contemporary Byzantine term, the iconomachy.[12] It was Leo V who reimposed iconoclasm in 815 after an intermission of almost three decades, decreeing that religious images should be removed from places of honour where they might deflect attention from true manifestations of the divine, such as the cross or eucharist. If icons were divinely favoured, the rationale of Leo and others went, why would God have consistently given victory to the empire's Islamic and Bulgar enemies over the preceding decades? Historians have consistently attributed iconoclastic beliefs to the Paulicians, explaining their sudden growth to prominence by positing a loose alliance with Byzantine iconoclasts during the latter half of the 8th century, with particular emphasis placed on the actions of the much-maligned, but fascinating and militarily astute, iconoclast emperor Constantine V (741–775).[13] The thesis that Paulicians were iconoclasts sits very uneasily with their persecution immediately after the restoration of iconoclasm, however. In fact, the evidence suggests that the Paulicians did not fit straightforwardly within

10 On Armenians and the Armeniakon, see Kaldellis, *Romanland*, pp. 176–177; Nina G. Garsoïan, "The Problem of Armenian Integration into the Byzantine Empire," in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, eds. Hélène Ahrweiler, Angeliki E. Laiou (Washington, D.C., 1998), pp. 53–56; Peter Charanis, "The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire," *Byzantinoslavica* 22 (1961), pp. 203–205. On the theme system, see Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 723–771, with literature.

11 On Leo V, see Leslie Brubaker, John F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 366–385.

12 On the iconomachy, see the exhaustive Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, or the more accessible Leslie Brubaker, *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm* (London, 2012).

13 On Paulicians and iconoclasm, see Nina G. Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy. A Reinterpretation," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 25 (1971), pp. 97–105; Milan Loos, "Le mouvement paulicien à Byzance," *Byzantinoslavica* 24 (1963), pp. 267–276; Leslie W. Barnard, "The Paulicians and Iconoclasm," in *Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, eds. Anthony Bryer, Judith Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), pp. 75–82.

an iconodule-iconoclast dichotomy at all, but were rather a convenient common enemy to invoke during the most acrimonious phases of the iconomachy. They were targeted not only after Leo's reimposition of iconoclasm, but also after the ultimate reversal of Leo's policy, when the empress Theodora, regent for her infant son Michael III (842–867), restored icon veneration at the event now known as the Triumph of Orthodoxy (843). The resulting persecution of Paulicians was so intense that it drove many of them from the empire altogether. Under the leadership of the aforementioned Karbeas, who served as *protomandator* under Theodotos Melissenos, the general of the Anatolikon thema, they defected to the redoubtable Emir of Melitene (Malaṭya) ʿAmr b. ʿUbaydallāh b. Marwān al-Aqṭaʿ al-Sulamī, with whose aid they established themselves in the no-man's land between Roman and Islamic territory.[14] From here they would raid the eastern themata of the empire for decades, proving a constant thorn in its side until the demise of Chrysocheir in 872 eliminated them as a major threat. Their main stronghold of Tephrikē held out until its eventual capture in 878/79.

It hardly needs emphasising that this remarkable set of developments mark the Paulicians as one of the most enigmatic religious phenomena in the eastern Mediterranean during the 9th century. At its outset they were practically unknown, yet by its midpoint they had been persecuted twice and had aligned themselves with the empire's Muslim enemies. Within another quarter of a century their defiance had reached unprecedented heights – according to the later Byzantine historian Genesios, Chrysocheir demanded the empire's Asiatic provinces for himself – before their sudden and equally dramatic fall, although, as we saw at the outset, Paulicians would remain a consistent, but capricious, inclusion in Roman armies in later centuries.[15] Paradoxes abound in this account: the Paulicians are the devout Pauline Christians who allied themselves with Muslims. In 815 they were led by Sergios-Tychikos, a pacific religious leader; in 845 by Karbeas, a turncoat from the imperial army. To many modern historians, they are heterodox Armenians with long-standing iconoclast sympathies, but this hardly explains their treatment by Leo V: why would an Armenian iconoclast persecute Armenian iconoclasts? Underneath all of these contradictions there undoubtedly lies some amount of dissimulation

14 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur Libri I-IV*, 4:16, eds. and trans. J. Michael Featherstone, Juan Signes Codoñer (Boston/Berlin, 2015), pp. 236–237.

15 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:35, eds. Anni Lesmüller-Werner, Hans P. Thurn, (Berlin/New York, 1978), p. 86. English translation: *Genesios. On the Reigns of the Emperors*, ed. Anthony Kaldellis (Canberra, 1998), p. 107.

and misconception. However, it also seems that we are dealing with a movement of considerable dynamism and complexity, a movement so attuned to aspects of provincial Roman society that it could expand swiftly and thrive in many different areas and social contexts, in the process transcending its origins to accumulate internal tensions that prove mystifying, but fascinating, to the historian.

Nothing attests this so convincingly as the striking volte faces which opened this book. The Paulicians may have exasperated the likes of Basil I and Alexios I, but these emperors also found plenty to admire, provided that the energy of these warlike heretics could be channelled. Although it might not be immediately obvious, a similar ambivalence manifests in ecclesiastical views of them. Peter of Sicily and Theophanes the Confessor may have clamoured for the death penalty, but more clement views are found elsewhere. Theodore the Stoudite, for instance, implored Michael I and Leo V for leniency on the Paulicians' behalf, succeeding in alleviating their sufferings in the former case.[16] While the empress Theodora's persecution slew a great host of Paulicians, the history now known as *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV, written a century after these events, saw her actions as counterproductive folly which "brought many evils upon our land."[17] While writing at the height of the Paulician menace, the patriarch Photios was not quite so forgiving, decreeing the death penalty appropriate for the unwavering, but repentance was still not a prospect he would rule out. A more tolerant approach came to prevail in later centuries, as exemplified in the letter of the patriarch Theophylaktos Lekapenos to Peter I of Bulgaria, which notes that capital punishment must only be reserved for those who are truly impenitent in their error.[18] Although the history of Byzantine-Paulician interaction may initially seem one of bloodshed, in practice things were more nuanced.

In the long term, the Paulicians proved something of a double-edged sword for the empire. Both John Tzimiskes and Alexios Komnenos attempted to wield this blade against hostile invaders in the Balkans to varying degrees of effectiveness. Their tendency to desert or switch sides was troubling enough, but

16 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 494, l. 33 – p. 495, l. 15. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 678; Theodore the Stoudite, *Theodori Studitae epistulae*, *Ep*. 455, vol. 2, p. 647, l. 82–85.

17 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:16, pp. 236–237, l. 1–22.

18 Theophylaktos Lekapenos, "L'epistola sui Bogomili del patriarca constantinopolitano Teofilatto," ed. Ivan Dujčev, in *Mélanges E. Tisserant II* (Vatican City, 1964), pp. 312–313, l. 55–63. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), pp. 98–99.

their religious zeal presented a secondary threat, particularly in the form of the indigenous heretical movement that they supposedly inspired: the Bogomils of Bulgaria, who are accused of dualism by Slavonic and Byzantine writers alike. According to the Slavonic sources, it was during the reign of the Bulgar Tsar Peter I that the priest Bogomil first promulgated his doctrine, which would have a long history east of the Adriatic.[19] By the reign of Alexios the heresy had infiltrated the empire and even the elite circles of Constantinople, thereby driving the emperor to take preventative measures against the wizened heresiarch Basil, the movement's figurehead in the capital. The Bogomil threat never troubled the empire so seriously again, but a new dualist creed would later emerge in the heart of western Christendom, where a handful of controversial texts attest links between Bogomil missionaries and heretics in Lombardy and the Languedoc. It was in the Languedoc – and, more specifically, the County of Toulouse and its dependencies – that the heresy of the Cathars, or the good men, sunk its roots deepest.[20] Where the brutality of the Albigensian Crusade (1209–1229) failed to stamp it out, the newly founded institution of inquisition succeeded in reducing it to a few isolated vestiges, but only after the society of the region had been transformed by war and dislocation.[21] This, in brief, is the tradition of Christian dualism in the Middle Ages. Placing the Paulicians within this lineage is not as easy as first appears; in many respects, they are the black sheep of the family. In contrast to the ascetic Bogomils and Cathars, the Paulician *didaskaloi* procreated and followed no dietary restrictions, whereas

19 Literature on the Bogomils is extensive in Eastern European languages, but the subject lacks a recent comprehensive overview. For the traditional intepretation, see Dimitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge, 1948) and more recently John Sanidopoulos, *The Rise of Bogomilism and Its Penetration into Constantinople: With a Complete Translation of Euthymios Zygabenos' 'Concerning Bogomilism'* (Rollinsford, 2011), pp. 33–67; Bernard Hamilton, "Introduction," in *Hugo Eteriano: Contra Patarenos*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton, Sarah Hamilton (Leiden, 2004), pp. 35–56; Yuri Stoyanov, *The Other God: Dualist Religions from Antiquity to the Cathar Heresy* (New Haven/London, 2000), pp. 158–183. A more sceptical account is given by Michael Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081–1261* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 468–501. For a recent study with literature, see Maja Angelovska-Panova, "Turning Towards Heresy: Bogomils and Self-Defence," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 63 (2019), pp. 81–94.

20 See Malcolm D. Lambert, *The Cathars* (Oxford, 1998); Malcolm Barber, *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon, 2013).

21 On the Albigensian Crusade, see Laurence W. Marvin, *The Occitan War: A Military and Political History of the Albigensian Crusade, 1209–1218* (Cambridge, 2008); Mark G. Pegg, *A Most Holy War: The Albigensian Crusade and the Battle for Christendom* (Oxford/New York, 2008). On inquisition, see John H. Arnold, *Inquisition and Power: Catharism and the Confessing Subject in Medieval Languedoc* (Philadelphia, 2001).

their elites were not distinct from ordinary believers in terms of dress or lifestyle. Their dualism, much like the Marcionites who are often held to have influenced them, posited two coeternal principles, whereas most Bogomils and Cathars considered the evil demiurge to be a fallen creation of the benevolent God.[22] For this reason, the Paulicians are often considered an indirect influence on what followed them. This scepticism may not go far enough. Evidence adduced herein shows that, in our period at least, the Paulicians were not dualists at all.

This contention naturally problematises the relationship between the Paulicians and the dualists who were supposedly influenced by them. Leaving this aside for the moment, even in our period the movement is not easy to pin down. This is most apparent in the two faces of the Paulicians which appear in our sources: one, the persecuted minority fleeing from outside interference that is found in their own testimony; and the other, the inveterate troublemakers who seek to overthrow the imperial order, as Byzantine chronicles, hagiographies, and heresiologies would present them. This difference in perspective is, of course, hardly a surprise because it arises from the desires of both communities to denigrate their opponents' claims to sanctity while extolling their own

22 The Manichaean interpretation of the sources was largely upheld until Gieseler proposed Marcionite influences. For the latter, see Johann C.L. Gieseler, "Untersuchen über die Geschichte der Paulikianer," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 2:1 (1829), pp. 103–111; Karapet Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer im byzantinischen Kaiserreiche und verwandte ketzerische Erscheinungen in Armenien* (Leipzig, 1893), pp. 104–112; Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: das Evangelium vom fremden Gott*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1924), pp. 382–383; Henri Grégoire, "Les sources de l'histoire des Pauliciens. Pierre de Sicile est authentique et 'Photius' un faux," *Académie Royale de Belgique, Bulletin Classe des Lettres, 5e série* 22 (1936), p. 105; Felix Scheidweiler "Paulikianerprobleme," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 43 (1950), pp. 366–371; Milan Loos, "Deux contributions à l'histoire des Pauliciens. I: A propos des sources grecques reflétant des Pauliciens," *Byzantinoslavica* 17 (1956), pp. 22–38; Ioannes E. Anastasiou, "Οἱ Παυλικιάνοι, Ἡ ἱστορία καὶ ἡ διδασκαλία των ἀπὸ τῆς ἐμφανίσεως μέχρι τῶν νεωτέρων χρόνων," *Ἑταιρεία Θρακικῶν Μελετῶν* 75 (1959); Joseph Hoffman, "The Paulician Heresy: A Reappraisal," *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 2:2 (1983), pp. 251–263; Ioan Petru Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity to Modern Nihilism* (San Francisco, 1992), pp. 189–197. For the lone view which proposes Manichaean influence post-Gieseler, see Johann Friedrich, "Der ursprüngliche, bei Georgios Monachos nur theilweise erhaltene Bericht über die Paulikianer," *Sitzungsberichte der Philosophisch-Philologischen und Historischen Classe der K.B. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München* (*Jahrgang 1896*) (1897), pp. 90–98. The tendency to trace Paulician beliefs to late antique movements is criticised by both Garsoïan and Nersessian, the former of whom notes that this "forces us to conjure up phantom sects appearing and disappearing like the Cheshire cat," while the latter opines that such interpretations would only be possible "if history took place in an intellectual test-tube." See Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy. A Reinterpretation," p. 97; Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, p. 41.

virtues. It also reflects the reality of the Paulicians' gradual estrangement from the empire following persecution during the 810s. But there is another sense in which Paulician and Roman sources are more difficult to reconcile. For the period before the persecution of the 810s, we are mainly reliant on Paulician testimony, whereas from the period afterward we are increasingly dependent on Roman texts. This period marks a shift in the Paulicians' organisation which is most troublesome to trace: the change from the religious leadership of the *didaskaloi* to the militaristic adventurers Karbeas and Chrysocheir. The salient question is whether this shift corresponds to a genuine sea change in Paulician practices, or whether it is a mirage caused by the differing identification strategies of our sources. To give an instructive example, since Karbeas was a deserter from the Roman Army, it is possible that the labelling of his followers as Paulicians reflects an attempt to deflect attention from an uncomfortable mutiny of Roman troops. Although I am still not entirely convinced, on the balance of the evidence it seems that the communities of Sergios and Karbeas were meaningfully linked. There are indications of geographical continuity between the two and, more pointedly, Sergios' own remarks make clear that there were militaristic Paulicians in his own day who frequently scorned his authority. His testimony therefore suggests that the Paulicians' two faces, their militaristic and religious sides, are best characterised not as a binary conflict between opposing factions, but rather as reflecting tensions which penetrate to the very heart of Paulician identity. As a result, it is necessary to keep these facets continually in mind, particularly because the tensions between the two provide the only window into their evolution into a more martial threat between the two major Byzantine persecutions; a process for which we sadly lack Paulician sources. Most pertinently, it is by tackling internal contradictions such as these that we can see dissident religion as a product of multidirectional social interactions, based on contested power relations and different norms of identification, rather than doctrinal matters alone. This will underlie our approach going forward.

1 Rethinking the Paulicians

Given the richness of the above portrayal, it might rightly mystify some to learn that study of the Paulicians has been neglected for decades.[23] In many respects they seem the perfect topic for a pluralistic, globalised, but fractious world in

23 See recently, however, Donka Radeva, *Павликяни и павликянство в българските земи: архетип и повторения VII-XVII век* (Sofia, 2015); Stefano Fumagalli, *L'eresia dei*

which cultural and religious conflict have become inescapable facts of life. Located at a confluence where religious dissent, persecution, and Christian-Muslim warfare all meet, where distinctions between the ethnic and the religious blur into insignificance, it is difficult to conceive of a medieval parallel with such modern relevance. Yet historians have looked elsewhere for such themes, to familiar reference points such as *jihād* or crusade.[24] In part, the obscurity of the Paulicians and the complexity of the sources which describe them must be at play here, but the fundamental problem is that they have so seldom been studied for their own sake. Instead, they have attracted attention for their influence on the later Bogomil and Cathar heresies, or to uphold romanticised conceptions of Armenian religious identity that privilege the nation's status as the first polity to officially adopt Christianity. It is no coincidence that as historians have become less interested in ethno-national or religious searches for origins such as these the Paulicians have receded sharply from their focus. The transcontinental dualist thesis that links them with the Bogomils and Cathars resonates rather less today than it did for much of the last century. Academic concerns have shifted away from doctrinal influence and towards the power of beliefs and practices to manifest and reproduce themselves in particular social contexts; identity – that most nebulous of scholarly constructs – is relational, contingent, and plural; names are not descriptors of codified belief systems, but connote dialectical processes of identity negotiation, often between the dominant and the disenfranchised. In short, heresy has become postmodern. The Paulicians have weathered this change worse than most. Work on the subject has, a few notable studies aside, scarcely advanced in the past half century. When interest is roused, the writer's pen has commonly focused on the years when they were sandwiched between the empire and the 'Abbāsid Caliphate, which was steadily fragmenting throughout our period into a ring of independent satellites around a core of nominal power. This book is no exception. Where it differs from its predecessors is its attempt to embed the Paulicians within this context and explain how the movement could grow swiftly enough to play a crucial role in regional politics in just a few

Pauliciani: Dualismo religioso e ribellione nell'Impero Bizantino (Milan, 2019). My ignorance of Bulgarian has precluded use of the former here.

24 As a result, Byzantine conceptions of holy war have been a recurring concern. See Tia M. Kolbaba, "Fighting for Christianity: Holy War in the Byzantine Empire," *Byzantion* 68:1 (1998), pp. 194–221; Ioannis Stouraitis, "Jihād and Crusade: Byzantine Positions Towards the Notions of "Holy War,"" *Byzantina Symmeikta* 21 (2011), pp. 11–63; John F. Haldon, "Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Views on Islam and on Jihād, c.900 CE.," in *Italy and Early Medieval Europe: Papers for Chris Wickham*, eds. Ross Balzaretti, Julia Barrow, Patricia Skinner (Oxford, 2018), pp. 476–485.

decades. Eschewing the traditional dualist identification, it understands the Paulicians as largely conventional Christians who rose to prominence through the charismatic fervour of their leaders and their ability to articulate the allure of an apostolic life in a frontier society which was ripe for complex ethno-cultural interaction.

Most of all, this book is driven by the conviction that the Paulicians matter. Even the most outstanding and exhaustive scholarship on the Byzantine Empire during our period mentions them only in passing.[25] This neglect is, sadly, not a surprise, stemming from an understandable desire to swiftly dispense with a subject best known for intractable disputes about the nature of the movement's beliefs, or the authenticity of the sources that describe it. As a result, study of the Paulicians remains something of an island, isolated from the subjects – and, more importantly, the methodological developments – that should rightly cross-pollinate with it.[26] The problem is exemplified most of all by the decline of the old dualist Paulician-Bogomil-Cathar lineage. Although it is still accepted by many historians, this is because the fundamental paradigms for studying the Paulicians and Bogomils have not shifted for a generation or more, which could not be further from the truth in the case of the Cathars, if Cathars we may still call them. This latter field has seen an explosion of interest in more recent decades, culminating in theoretical innovations which have transformed the subject and largely emancipated it from the old dualist metanarrative. In some cases, this emancipation has been overt and radical, such that Languedocian dualism is seen as an indigenous phenomenon with no links to its eastern predecessors, but, even in more traditional approaches, the interest in dualist origins is often confined to brief introductory remarks.[27] Due to this decreased interest in eastern origins, the methodological ingenuity

25 See, for instance, the scant mention of Paulicians in excellent works such as Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*; Juan Signes Codoñer, *The Emperor Theophilos and the East, 829–842: Court and Frontier in Byzantium during the Last Phase of Iconoclasm* (Farnham, 2014); John F. Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640–740* (Cambridge, MA, 2016).

26 A rare example of a collaborative approach is Andrew P. Roach, Maja Angelovska-Panova, "Punishment of Heretics: Comparisons and Contrasts between Western and Eastern Christianity in the Middle Ages," *Journal of History* (*Macedonia*) 47:1 (2012), pp. 145–171.

27 For dualism as a native Languedocian phenomenon, see Mark G. Pegg, "The Paradigm of Catharism; or, the Historians' Illusion," in *Cathars in Question*, ed. Antonio C. Sennis (York, 2016), pp. 21–52; Mark G. Pegg, "Albigenses in the Antipodes: An Australian and the Cathars," *Journal of Religious History* 35:4 (2011), pp. 577–600; Robert I. Moore, *The War on Heresy: Faith and Power in Medieval Europe* (London, 2012). On the scant interest in eastern origins in more traditional approaches, see Barber, *The Cathars*, pp. 7–32; Claire Taylor, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition in Medieval Quercy* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 3–8.

associated with medieval heresy has rarely been applied to the Paulicians.[28] The same is true of the enormous body of groundbreaking scholarship on religion in Late Antiquity, whose insights might also have enriched our understanding of Paulician doctrine and praxis.[29] This is clearly regrettable, but, on a more positive note, the comparative dearth of interest in the Paulicians presents us with the opportunity to reinvent the subject on similar lines to the excellent studies alluded to above, without needing to tackle the interpretive baggage that accompanies a subject which has long remained in vogue.

This is my aim here. By weaving Paulician history into the rich tapestry of Byzantine and Islamic studies, I seek to establish it as a subject of worth in its own right, rather than a neglected adjunct of the Cathars or Bogomils. Inevitably, this book can only be a small part of this process, but I hope to show that study of the Paulicians can enrich our understanding of contemporary developments in nuanced and at times surprising ways. For instance, recent research on Byzantine religious disputes – such as the Monothelite controversy of the 7th century, the iconomachy of the 8th and 9th centuries, and the growing divide between Rome and Constantinople from the 9th century onward – has revealed that these controversies were rewritten after the fact in order to legitimate the adoption of beliefs, praxes, and ideological positions which were often innovative or contested.[30] I argue here that the Paulicians too were reimagined and that the resulting 10th-century reimagination was so successful that it remains central to their portrayal to this day. The Paulicians are therefore ideally positioned to contribute to a more incisive understanding of Byzantine religious history, critiquing teleologies which have long remained unchallenged in our sources because the field has still not transcended its entanglement with Eastern Orthodox Christianity and, in some countries, its associated ethno-national mythologies. To give

28 This is despite excellent work on Byzantine religion such as Susan Wessel, "Literary Forgery and the Monothelete Controversy: Some Scrupulous Uses of Deception," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 42:2 (2001), pp. 201–220; Averil Cameron, "How to Read Heresiology," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33:3 (2003), pp. 471–492.

29 Peter R.L. Brown, "Holy Men," in *The Cambridge Ancient History, XIV: Late Antiquity. Empire and Successors AD 425–600*, eds. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, Michael Whitby (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 781–810; Eduard Iricinschi, Holger M. Zellentin, eds., *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity* (Tübingen, 2008); Judith Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century* (Cambridge, 2015).

30 Marek Jankowiak, "The Invention of Dyotheletism," *Studia Patristica* 63 (2013), pp. 335–342; Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–85: A History*, pp. 772–799; Tia M. Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin Heretics: Byzantines and the Filioque in the Ninth Century* (Kalamazoo, 2008).

another example, while the Paulician raiding campaigns of the 840s onward have traditionally been interpreted from a Roman standpoint, an Islamic perspective might prove more illuminating, particularly given the close cooperation between the Paulicians and the Emirate of Melitene and the similarity of their raiding practices.[31] Some of the conclusions advanced herein may prove more controversial. Above all, the thesis that the Paulicians did not espouse dualism during our period necessitates interpretive dexterity for those concerned with the origins of the Bogomils. Instead of positing doctrinal influence between the two movements, a more complex picture of power relations might emerge, whereby Roman heresiological norms and identification strategies link the two movements in a common discourse conditioned by the anxieties, preconceptions, and expectations of Byzantine religious culture. In other words, we might be looking at a doctrinal continuity perceived or imposed by the identifier, rather than influence from one identified group to another. The *Letter of Theophylaktos Lekapenos*, which many scholars believe attests to the earliest traces of the Bogomils in Byzantine sources, is naturally conducive to such a reading, as it describes heresy in Bulgaria in quintessentially Paulician terms during the height of Byzantine interest in the Paulicians during the sole reign of Constantine VII (945–959). Questions like this must remain open for the present, but they may show the way forward. This book is an attempt to breathe life into what is in many respects an old and weary subject. If it brings disagreement, this is infinitely preferable to the disengagement that has long prevailed.

That being said, disagreement too has a long and rich history in Paulician studies and, once more, this disagreement stems from their subordination to other historical agendas. Distilling four centuries of scholarship into a few sentences necessarily simplifies matters greatly of course, but research has traditionally been dominated by two sets of competing metanarratives. The first of these relates to debates from the 16th century onward between Catholic and Protestant historians about whether dissident religious movements in the Middle Ages (including, but not restricted to, Paulicians, Bogomils, Cathars, Waldensians, Wycliffites, and Hussites)[32] were the heretical forebears of the squabbling Protestant churches, as most Catholic authors maintained, or

31 The recent work of Tayyara focuses on doctrinal matters. Abed el-Rahman Tayyara, "Muslim-Paulician Encounters and Early Islamic Anti-Christian Writings," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 27:4 (2016), pp. 471–489.

32 Peter Biller, *The Waldenses, 1170–1530* (Aldershot, 2001); Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Clarendon, 1988); Thomas A. Fudge, *Jan Hus: Religious Reform and Social Revolution in Bohemia* (London, 2010).

whether they were survivals of non-hierarchical Christianity that were arbitrarily slandered by the illegitimate and authoritarian Catholic Church, as most Protestants alleged.[33] Both traditions were essentially concerned with linking movements into genealogies of influence and, in doing so, they created narratives that valorised a chain of heretical dualism linking the Manichaeans, Paulicians, Bogomils, and Cathars with later reform movements. This interpretation survived, albeit in truncated form, as the lineage of medieval Christian dualism.[34] Crucially, this series of Catholic-Protestant disputes established a paradigm in which one party viewed the dissidents of the Middle Ages as dualist-inspired heretics, while the other conceived of them as true survivals of the apostolic church. Substantially identical positions were taken up by a second string of metanarratives, extant from the late 19th century onward, which respectively understood the Paulicians through Greek or Armenian sources.[35] Those who favoured the testimony of the Greek sources maintained that the Paulicians were dualists, much like earlier Catholic historians. By contrast,

33 A particular touchstone of debate was the extent of continuity between the Cathars and Waldensians (whose differences were rarely well heeded at the time) and the later Protestant churches. Paulicians are rarely invoked in this dispute, at least until Bossuet. For the background, see Marie-Hubert Vicaire, ed., *Historiographie du Catharisme* (Toulouse, 1979). For some of the most important texts in this tradition, see the Catholic authors Bernardus Lutzenburgus, *Catalogus haereticorum* (Cologne, 1529); Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Histoire des variations des eglises protestantes*, 2nd ed., 4 vols, vol. 3 (Paris, 1689), pp. 124–200. For Protestant scholarship, see Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Catalogus testium veritatis, qui ante nostram aetatem reclamarunt Papae* (Basle, 1556), pp. 704–761; Johann Lorenz von Mosheim, *Institutionum historiae ecclesiasticae antiquae et recentioris* (Frankfurt/Leipzig, 1726), pp. 493–495; 555–556; 600–602.

34 The classic expression, which still resembles the account of Bossuet in many respects, remains Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee: A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy* (Cambridge, 1947). For more recent formulations of this approach, see Hamilton, "Introduction," in *Hugo Eteriano: Contra Patarenos*, pp. 1–102; Stoyanov, *The Other God*.

35 This dynamic becomes particularly apparent after the publication of Ter Mkrttschian's *Die Paulikianer im byzantinischen Kaiserreiche*. Before this date, Paulicians attracted significantly more interest from Protestant authors than Catholic ones, largely because they were considered a precursor of later reform movements. This scholarship often followed the sources in identifying the Paulicians as dualists, while insisting that their beliefs were laudable for the time, particularly in regard to their opposition to the established church. On this, see Frederik Schmidt, *Historia Paulicianorum orientalum* (Copenhagen, 1826), pp. 1–5; 61–63; 68–74; Georg B. Winer, Johann G.V. Engelhardt, "Die Paulicianer. Eine kirchenhistorische Abhandlung," *Neues kritisches Journal der theologischen Literatur* 7 (1827), pp. 136–165; Gieseler, "Untersuchen über die Geschichte," pp. 80–81; 107–108; Adrien Edmond Febvrel, *Des Pauliciens: Thèse presenté à la Faculté de Theologie protestante de Strasbourg* (Strasbourg, 1868), pp. 51–53; Alexandre Lombard, *Pauliciens, bulgares et bons-hommes en Orient et en Occident* (Geneva, 1879), pp. xv-xx.

scholars working on Armenian traditions advanced serious criticisms which questioned the authenticity of the Greek sources.[36] As a result, they gave greater credence to the Armenian sources, which in their view indicated that Paulician doctrine was a survival of the adoptionist Christianity that they argued predominated in early Armenia. This position, which saw Paulician doctrine as a legitimate and doctrinally pure survival of early Christianity, took up the mantle of Protestant scholarship and, in some works, the dependence is more or less explicit.[37] Of course, the two sets of metanarratives do not map perfectly upon one another – the scholarship is far too complicated for that – but they have, directly or otherwise, dominated study of the Paulicians for centuries. The contrast between these approaches is still exemplified in the two most recent systematic accounts of the heresy, that of the Armenologist Nina Garsoïan and the Byzantinist Paul Lemerle.[38]

Nothing demonstrates the inflexibility of past approaches more forcibly than the almost total neglect of a body of material whose importance is self-evident: the Paulician sources. Aside from the late and problematic *Key of Truth*, a text discovered in Armenia during the 19th century which is believed by its advocates to be representative of Paulician (or even earlier) beliefs, interest in Paulician material has been curiously absent. The most well-known source on the heresy, Peter of Sicily's *History of the Paulicians*, explicitly attests the existence of such sources, alluding to and quoting from the letters of the *didaskalos* Sergios-Tychikos.[39] The possibility that Sergios' letters were only a small part of a greater body of Paulician material underlying the *History* was first raised by Carl Rudolf Moeller at the beginning of the 20th century and periodically repeated thereafter, most notably by Nina Garsoïan and Paul Speck.[40] Yet no-one analysed this Paulician material for its own sake until the trailblazing efforts of Claudia Ludwig, who first studied this account of Paulician history in

36 Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer im byzantinischen Kaiserreiche*; Frederick C. Conybeare (ed.), *The Key of Truth*; Nina G. Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy* (Paris/The Hague, 1967).

37 Conybeare, *Key of Truth*, *in passim*. A point of caution must be raised here, since Conybeare's religious affiliation was Anglo-Catholic (in fact, in 1894 he was consecrated a bishop of the Order of Corporate Reunion, which sought to reunify the churches through reordinations). As a result, although Protestant and Armenian conceptions of the Paulicians coalesced in his work, he did not straightforwardly identify with either group.

38 Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*; Paul Lemerle, "L'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure d'après les sources grecques," *Travaux et mémoires* 5 (1973), pp. 1–144.

39 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 43; 157–167, pp. 20–23; 58–63. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 73; 87–89.

40 Carl R. Moeller, *De Photii Petrique Siculi libris contra Manichaeos scriptis* (Bonn, 1910), pp. 41–43; Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 62–67; Paul Speck, "Petros Sikeliotes, seine Historia und der Erzbischof von Bulgarien," *ELLHNIKA* 27 (1974), pp. 384–387.

the 1980s, naming it the *Didaskalie*.[41] Although I differ from Ludwig on a couple of minor points – I believe that the *Didaskalie* and *Letters of Sergios* were distinct texts, while she holds that the latter were subsumed within the former – her analysis of Paulician belief provides my starting point here. Critically, she found no grounds in the Paulician material to support the Manichaean identification of the Roman heresiologists, instead finding that their religiosity was founded simply on a heightened reverence for Paul and apostolic Christianity as it appears in the foundational texts of the New Testament.[42] In what follows, I seek not just to corroborate Ludwig's conclusions, but to go beyond them by articulating how and why the apostolic Christianity she identified originated, grew, and prospered in Armenia and eastern Asia Minor, thereby placing Paulician history unambiguously on its own terms. Only by doing this can we adequately explain their later history of persecution, insurrection, and warfare and integrate it into the broader framework of medieval near eastern history.

Equally, however, it is imperative to explain how and why Byzantine understandings of the Paulicians were so misguided, or perhaps more accurately, why their reverence for religious written traditions, their domestic religio-political concerns, and the vagaries of Roman-Paulician interaction caused them to maintain, more or less unchanged, a doctrinal identification in their texts whose inaccuracy must surely have become manifest to some. It is not sufficient to invoke the spectre of a decadent church or an oppressive empire here, not only because this risks intimating ideological standpoints that simplify a series of contingent and interrelated developments, but also because Byzantine understandings of Paulicians did evolve and, at certain times, opposition to their persecution was relatively widespread. Overtly or otherwise, writing is always a political project. In the older disputes between Catholic and Protestant history writing, views on the Paulicians were very much bipartisan, but in more recent times, when an instinctive aversion to religious violence underlies the majority of scholarship, much work has been implicitly sympathetic to them. There is much in their history that renders this understandable, but it ought to be resisted: the victims of Karbeas and Chrysocheir deserve our sympathy as much as those of Leo V and Theodora. In historiographical terms, pro-Paulician sentiments can lead to obvious traps, such as proto-Protestantism, anti-clericalism, or crypto-anarchism, that I have sought to avoid here. It is for this reason that this book is in many places more

41 Claudia Ludwig, "Wer hat was in welcher Absicht wie beschreiben? Bemerkungen zur Historia des Petros Sikeliotes über die Paulikianer," *Varia 2 Ποικιλα byzantina* 6 (1987), pp. 149–227.

42 Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 224–225.

concerned with Roman-Paulician relations than the Paulicians as such. This should become apparent in the following two chapters, which describe when and why the principal Greek sources against the heresy were composed and how this affects our understanding of them, but the same concern also drives the more overtly historical chapters which follow.

2 One Heresy or Two? Paulicians in Armenia and Asia Minor

The focus on Paulician-Byzantine interaction in the 8th and 9th centuries leads to the most contentious decision I have made in this book: the decision to exclude the Armenian sources from my focus.[43] The diligent reader might rightly be startled at this; after all, I have only just emphasised the negative effects of approaches that take one source tradition as their starting point. My counterargument is that the Armenian sources would indeed make a fascinating object of study – but that study would have little to do with the Paulicians of Asia Minor. The most obvious indicator of this is that, to my knowledge, there are no such Armenian sources for the Paulicians during the period covered by this book.[44] Besides this, early Armenian sources do not preserve vestiges of Paulician testimony or describe beliefs like those of our Paulicians. While the remnants of the Paulician sources preserved in Greek texts portray a distinctly Pauline and apostolic form of Christianity, earlier Armenian sources fail to invoke a consistent picture of the beliefs of the Paylikeank', Polikeank',

43 The omission is, I should note, impelled by my own linguistic limitations and, given this fact, it seems appropriate to provide a disclaimer noting how I might approach the topic if this obstacle did not apply. As should become apparent below, owing to the consensus opinion that the Armenian and Greek sources are not easily reconcilable, I find it unlikely that extensive engagement with the Armenian sources would change the interpretation offered herein significantly. Rather more might, however, be gained by a thoroughgoing immersion in the thought-world of medieval Armenian society and its religious culture, which could well illuminate some of the more obscure proclivities of the Paulicians in our period, for instance, their idiosyncratic understanding of the Holy Spirit or their lack of asceticism.

44 There are no known references to Paulicians in Armenian sources between Yovhannēs Ōjnec'i's writings in the early 8th century and the fall of Tephrikē. For the Armenian sources, see Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 80–111; Hratch M. Bartikian, *Istočniki dlja izučenija istorii pavlikianskogo dviženija* (Yerevan, 1961); Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer im byzantinischen Kaiserreiche*, pp. 39–103; Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 53–56; Seta B. Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians: Cultural and Political Interaction in the Near East* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 32–33; 36–47, as well as the literature cited below.

or Polikeans, if they describe their beliefs at all.[45] If this is frustrating, it is not exactly surprising. After all, the Greek sources too are inconsistent and inaccurate. It is a truism of heresy studies that descriptions of heretics tell us more about the author and culture responsible for those accounts than the heretics they purport to describe.[46] Even if a Paulician in 6th-century Armenia held the same belief as a Paulician in 9th-century Asia Minor, it is unlikely they would be described in the same way. In early Armenian traditions, doctrinal anxieties principally revolved around Zoroastrians and so-called Nestorians, whereas by our period concerns had shifted slightly towards Julianists and Chalcedonians.[47] By contrast, in Greek heresiologies, the *bête noires* were Arians, Manichaeans, and, in our period, whichever party in the iconoclast controversy was not currently in the ascendancy.[48] When the religious cultures underpinning the texts are so different, appraising the relationship between the Paulicians of Armenia and Asia Minor is far from straightforward. Continuity there may be, but it is not a continuity we can easily trace. Since Paulicians in early Armenia were mired in obscurity, it certainly seems necessary to posit a radical transformation during the latter half of the 8th century, when the movement gained ground quickly in Asia Minor. This transformation may well be driven by migration from the east: Armenian migration into Byzantine lands is well attested during precisely this period, while it is significant that Paulicians disappear from Armenian sources when they attained their maximum prominence in Roman territory. All of this implies a relationship of some

45 Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 80; 151; Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 54; Anne E. Redgate, "Catholicos John III's *Against the Paulicians* and the Paulicians of Tephrike," in *Armenian Sebastia/Sivas and Lesser Armenia*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Los Angeles, 2004), p. 96.

46 For methodological reflections on this and similar subjects, see Peter Biller, "Through a Glass Darkly: Seeing Medieval Heresy," in *The Medieval World*, eds. Peter Linehan, Janet L. Nelson (London, 2001), pp. 308–326, especially p. 309; John H. Arnold, "The Cathar Middle Ages as a Methodological and Historiographical Problem," in *Cathars in Question*, ed. Antonio C. Sennis (Woodbridge, 2016), pp. 53–78.

47 For Zoroastrianism, see James R. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia* (Cambridge, MA, 1987). For 'Nestorianism', see Wilhelm Baum, Dietmar W. Winkler, *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (London, 2010). For Julianism, see Aryeh Kofsky, "Julianism after Julian of Halicarnassus," in *Between Personal and Institutional Religion: Self, Doctrine and Practice in Late Antique Eastern Christianity*, eds. Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, Lorenzo Perrone (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 251–294. For Armenian sources connecting Paulicians with Nestorian and, more often, Zoroastrian tendencies, including by association with the Arewordik' or Children of the Sun, who venerated the sun and exposed their dead, see Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 85–95; 191–192.

48 For Arianism, see Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London, 2001); David M. Gwynn, *The Eusebians: The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the "Arian Controversy"* (Oxford, 2007).

kind between Paulician activity in both areas. Since this proves so difficult to pin down in practice, the specifics merit attention here.

Early Paulician activity in Armenia is wraithlike. Scattered references to 'the followers of the little Paul' are found in various Armenian texts from the 6th to 8th centuries (and possibly even earlier) without a consistent indication of who these people were, what they believed, and whence their name derived. These uncertainties are exacerbated by concerns of authenticity, since the two earliest references are often believed to have arisen as a result of interpolation. The first of these, the *Call to Repentance* of the kat'ołikos Yovhannēs I Mandakuni (478–490), which decrees a seven-year penance on the "Polikeans," unfortunately gives little specifics about the heretics in question, whereas the late date of the surviving manuscript and the uncertain attribution of the text to Yovhannēs have diminished its importance for some.[49] More weight has traditionally been placed on the *Oath of Union* composed at the 555 Council of Dvin convoked by Nersēs II of Aštarak (548–557). This text was written in response to one of the great bugbears of Armenian ecclesiastics: 'Nestorian' missionary activity. While Armenian traditions espoused a Miaphysite, or one-nature, Christology that emphasised the unity of Christ, within the Sasanian Empire the Church of the East promulgated the rival doctrine of two natures, although its Christology was entirely independent of Nestorios and his ideas.[50] In the process of describing missionary activity from Khūzistān, the *Oath of Union* compares the sacramental practices of these 'Nestorians' with the Paulicians, although since this comparison occurs in passing, it neither explains the latter name, nor elaborates on the doctrines and practices associated with it.[51] Nonetheless, it seems possible that the name was initially used in connection with Paul of Samosata and that identification would not be out of place here. While there is a considerable gulf between the teachings of Nestorios and Paul, as is unsurprising given that they lived in very different theological milieus, both shared a tendency to separate Christ's human and divine natures and might therefore be equated in some strands of Miaphysite thought. An association of Nestorians with Paul of Samosata on sacramental matters therefore

49 Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, p. 87; Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians*, p. 32. Both place little emphasis on the text and cite Hratch Bartikian as the most notable critic of its authority. See Bartikian, *Istočniki dlja izučenija istorii pavlikianskogo dviženija*.

50 Sebastian P. Brock, "The "Nestorian" Church: A Lamentable Misnomer," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 78:3 (1996), pp. 23–35.

51 For a translation of the passage with analysis, see Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 88–90. The text was first published by Ter Mkrttschian after his *Die Paulikianer im byzantinischen Kaiserreiche* and is therefore not discussed in that work or Conybeare's *Key of Truth*.

seems plausible in the *Oath of Union*.[52] It is, however, far from substantiated, not just due to the textual ambiguities, but also due to the possibility that the reference to Paulicians was added at a later date.[53]

Irrespective of how we interpret the above references, sources from the following centuries do not straightforwardly corroborate links with Paul of Samosata and are if anything even more nebulous in their understanding of Paulicians, aside from a recurring emphasis on iconoclasm. Garsoïan notes supposed allusions to them in letters of Vrt'anēs K'ert'oł and Yovhannēs Mayragomeçi (both early/mid- 7th century), who refer to iconoclastic activity within Armenia and Ałovania (otherwise known as Caucasian Albania, a land which corresponds to parts of modern Armenia and Azerbaijan), but the heretics in question are never termed Paulicians.[54] Other scholars have been more cautious in their inferences than Garsoïan, but, irrespective of whether a doctrinal connection is posited or not, conceptions of Paulicians in these years invariably revolve around their rejection of icons.[55] The relevance of

52 Note that the source is rarely connected with Paul, even by those who advocate the adoptionist position. Garsoïan, for instance, never attempts to determine the significance of the label 'Paulician' in regard to this text specifically. The link with Paul of Samosata seems a reasonable working hypothesis to me, however.

53 On the possibility that this reference was interpolated or caused by copyist's error, see Bartikian, *Istočniki dlja izučenija istorii pavlikianskogo dviženija*, pp. 85–88. Lemerle quotes Bartikian's proposal that the text originally read Paulianist, which seems plausible. See Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 54. For Garsoïan's rejoinders to Bartikian's objections, see Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, p. 90, n. 28. See also Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians*, pp. 32–33; Redgate, "Catholicos John III's *Against the Paulicians*," p. 86.

54 Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 90–92. Mayragomeçi's letter is only preserved in Moses Kałankatuaçi's 10th-century *History of the Albanians*. For a French translation of the letter, see Sirarpie Der Nersessian, "Une apologie des images du septième siècle," *Byzantion* 17 (1944–45), pp. 71–72. This article also includes a translation of K'ert'oł's letter at pp. 58–69. Andrea Schmidt argues that K'ert'oł's letter was also authored by Yovhannēs Mayragomeçi, or perhaps a follower of his. See Andrea B. Schmidt, "Gab es einen armenischen Ikonoklasmus? Rekonstruktion eines Dokuments der kaukasisch-albanischen Theologiegeschichte," in *Das Frankfurter Konzil von 794. Kristallisationspunkt karolingischer Kultur*, ed. Rainer Berndt, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Mainz, 1997), pp. 947–964, with criticism at Thomas F. Mathews, "Vrt'anēs Kert'oł and the Early Theology of Images," *Revue des études arméniennes* 31 (2008/09), pp. 109–110.

55 Although Paulicians and iconoclasts were closely linked in early scholarship based on the Armenian sources, the relationship between the two assumes greater prominence in Garsoïan's work since more sources were accessible to her than to her predecessors. For instance, Ter Mkrttschian and Conybeare did not utilise the works of K'ert'oł and Mayragomeçi. Moreover, Paulician-iconoclast links had been undermined somewhat before Garsoïan's study. Der Nersessian, following Grégoire, believed that the Paulicians of Byzantine territory, unlike their Armenian namesakes, were not iconoclasts and accordingly did not link the Paulicians to these texts. On this, see Der Nersessian, "Une

these texts to the Paulicians of our era is therefore problematised by the argument advanced herein that their Byzantine namesakes did not espouse iconoclastic views. Returning to 6th century Armenia, Anne Redgate notes some correspondences between Paulician ideas and the writings of Anania Širakac'i around the same time as the above sources, but, again, the link is conjectural.[56] The first unambiguous reference since the *Oath of Union* is difficult to date exactly, with authorities disagreeing over a 7th- or 8th-century date.[57] The source in question is actually a 12th-century one, the *History* of Samuel Anec'i, which includes a document referring to a council of the Ałovanians. Garsoïan believes the document is an amalgamation of two separate ones, but, for our purposes here, the point of interest is its proclamation of the necessity of condemning the Chalcedonians, the Mayragomeçi, and the Paulicians, although, once again, the meaning of the last-named is obscure.[58]

Only at the beginning of the 8th century do we get a sustained articulation of Paulician belief from the hand of the Armenian kat'ołikos Yovhannēs III Ōjnec'i (717–728). Yovhannēs, who was deeply concerned with heresy, convoked a council at Dvin in 719/20 to deal with the subject. The thirty-second canon of this council addresses the necessity of shunning the Polikeank', whom it considers a subdivision of the *Mcłnē* (an ascetic heresy that forswore manual labour; it is generally identified with the Messalians, but the

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apologie des images," pp. 73–74; Henri Grégoire, "Communication sur les Pauliciens," *Atti del V Congreso Internazionale di Studi Bizantini*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1939), pp. 176–177. Alexander, meanwhile, proposed that once iconoclast tenets began to evolve in more radical directions after the period in which Vrt'anēs and Yovhannēs were writing their doctrine did start to resemble that of the Paulicians, particularly as described by Yovhannēs III Ōjnec'i. The emphasis on the Paulicians is minor in his article, however. See Paul J. Alexander, "An Ascetic Sect of Iconoclasts in Seventh Century Armenia," in *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.*, ed. Kurt Weitzmann (Princeton, 1955), pp. 151–160, especially p. 159.

56 For Redgate, the defining features of these early strands of Paulician belief, which she reconstructs from the writings of Yovhannēs III Ōjnec'i and Peter of Sicily rather than earlier Armenian sources, were the rejection of the cross and the Old Testament. She links these tenets to the context of the 640s, particularly Anania's mathematical works and the emphasis placed on the cross by Herakleios. See Anne E. Redgate, "Seeking Promotion in the Challenging 640s: The Amatuni Church at Ptghni, Ideas of Political Authority, and Paulician Challenge – A Background to the Teaching of Anania Shirakatsi," *Aramazd: Armenian Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 9:1 (2015), pp. 163–176.

57 Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 92–94.

58 The relevance of the above sources to the Paulicians is questioned by Redgate, who sees Yovhannēs Ōjnec'i's work as the earliest undisputed Armenian source concerned with the heresy. See Redgate, "Catholicos John III's *Against the Paulicians*," p. 86.

identification is disputed by some).[59] Paradoxically though, both this canon and Yovhannēs' fullest work on the Paulicians, a more detailed treatise now known as the *Contra Paulicianos*, are almost totally neglected by those who emphasise the Armenian and adoptionist character of the heresy.[60] The reason for this is that the portrayal of the Paulicians within the *Contra Paulicianos* does not fit easily with that found elsewhere. Instead of the adoptionist or dualist emphases that might be expected, the text rails against pagan, animistic, and Zoroastrian practices, while Yovhannēs also attributes an iconoclastic bent to the Paulicians, accusing them particularly of rejecting the cross.[61] This haphazard selection of targets may be explained by Yovhannēs' concern for his flock, since Redgate notes that the treatise is predominantly concerned

59 For the canon, see Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, p. 11. That the *Mcłnē* should be identified with Messalians was first proposed by Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer im byzantinischen Kaiserreiche*, pp. 41–41 and has been upheld recently by Dadoyan and Zakarian. See Seta B. Dadoyan, *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World. Volume One: The Arab Period in Armīniyah – Seventh to Eleventh Centuries* (New Brunswick, 2011), p. 22; David Zakarian, "Syneisaktism in Early Armenian Christianity," *Le Muséon* 130:1–2 (2017), pp. 128–130. Both Garsoïan and Nersessian are sceptical, instead deriving the term for the Armenian word for filth. See Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 82–83; 207–209; Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, pp. 8–11. The recent analysis of Mardirossian agrees with Garsoïan's findings. See Aram Mardirossian, *Le livre des canons arméniens* (*Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*) *de Yovhannēs Awjnec'i: église, droit et société en Arménie du IVe au VIIIe siècle* (Leuven, 2004), pp. 190–191. Garsoïan, in fact, associates the *Mcłnē* at the Council of Šahapivan in 447 with the Paulicians, but this theory is questioned by Zakarian. See Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 207–210; Zakarian, "Syneisaktism in Early Armenian Christianity," pp. 128–129. The Messalians are frequently associated with the Bogomils in both primary and secondary literature on account of their asceticism. The association is rejected by Antonio Rigo, "Messalianismo = Bogomilismo: un equazione dell'ereseologia medievale bizantina," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 56 (1990), pp. 53–82. On the Messalians more generally, see the farsighted analysis of Daniel Caner, which reinterprets those circumscribed under the label as exponents of broadly orthodox strands of asceticism with a focus on wandering, poverty, and the precedence of prayer over manual labour. Such "Messalian" practices were proscribed as heretical by the early Church Fathers and the burgeoning influence of organised monasticism. Daniel Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2002).

60 Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 94–95. A notable exception is Redgate, who reconciles the text with an interpretation of Peter of Sicily derived largely from Lemerle, arguing that the sources show continuity in terms of dualism and iconoclasm, while proposing that Paulician belief shed its Zoroastrian and pre-Christian aspects in Byzantine territory. See Redgate, "Catholicos John III's *Against the Paulicians*," pp. 100–105.

61 On the text, see the useful summary in Redgate, "Catholicos John III's *Against the Paulicians*," pp. 94–96. See also, Sirarpie Der Nersessian, "Image Worship in Armenia and Its Opponents," *Armenian Quarterly* 1:1 (1946), pp. 71–73.

with articulating the orthodox standpoint as a means of combatting heretical influence, rather than a systematic doctrinal exposé.[62] As for Paulician activity in his own day, Yovhannēs places them predominantly in the region south-west of Lake Van, near the tributaries of the upper Tigris. In earlier times, he associates them with Ałovania, stating that after their expulsion from Armenia by a certain kat'ołikos Nerses (variously identified with the above-mentioned Nerses II or Nerses III (641–661)), they joined with Ałovanian iconoclasts and only resumed their activity within Armenia when circumstances were propitious.[63] Besides this iconoclastic emphasis, which has been singled out by some, a clear understanding of Paulician heterodoxy never surfaces in the text and, as a result, critics have considered it unreliable or confused.[64] This may be too harsh an assessment when its pastoral emphasis is taken into account, but it is notable that the most detailed and contemporary Armenian source on the Paulicians does not support the adoptionist or dualist positions, while the iconoclastic tendencies it attests cannot be reliably traced among the Paulicians of Asia Minor.

No other witnesses explicitly attest Paulicians during the 8th century. Some historians have considered them synonymous with the 'sons of sinfulness' described in the *History of Łewond*, but, as we shall see in Chapter 4, this seems to be a term of abuse that Łewond directs at several groups, rather than a distinct community.[65] References to Paulicians then give out entirely in Armenian sources, only to resume after the fall of Tephrikē. Some of those sources which postdate this event, such as the letters of the 11th-century writer Gregory Magistros, are notably dependent on the Greek sources.[66] However,

62 Redgate, "Catholicos John III's *Against the Paulicians*," pp. 97; 101.

63 For Nerses II, see Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, p. 19; Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 117, n. 13; 132–133; Der Nersessian, "Image Worship in Armenia," pp. 69–70. For Nerses III, see Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, pp. 38–39; Redgate, "Catholicos John III's *Against the Paulicians*," p. 82; Redgate, "Seeking Promotion," p. 170.

64 Their iconoclasm is noted particularly by Der Nersessian, Garsoïan, and Redgate. See Der Nersessian, "Image Worship in Armenia," pp. 69–73; Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 132–134; Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy," p. 95; Redgate, "Catholicos John III's *Against the Paulicians*," pp. 96; 101–102. On the low value often attributed to the text, see Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer im byzantinischen Kaiserreiche*, pp. 60–61; Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, pp. 32–34; 47; Redgate, "Catholicos John III's *Against the Paulicians*," pp. 96–98.

65 For the opposing view, see Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 85; 136–137; Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, p. 52.

66 Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 97–101; Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, pp. 49–50. For a recent study of Gregory's work which argues that he conceived of Paulicians and T'ondrakec'i as separate groups, see Federico Alpi, "L'identificazione fra tondrachiani e pauliciani e la testimonianza della lettera n. 4 (K67) di Grigor Magistros," in

for the most part, later references to heretical activity in Armenian sources do not refer to Paulicians at all, but rather to T'ondrakec'i, or Tondrakians.[67] The reason why the T'ondrakec'i are closely associated with the Paulicians is fairly logical: they come to prominence within Armenia shortly after the downfall of the Paulicians in Roman territory. Hence, the newfound prominence of the T'ondrakec'i is conventionally explained by the flight of Paulicians eastward following their defeat. The Armenian sources suggest the reality is somewhat more complex than this. They attribute the foundation of the T'ondrakec'i to Smbat of Zarehawan, who lived some decades before the fall of Tephrikē (he was a near contemporary of the *didaskalos* Sergios-Tychikos (800/01-834/35)) and based himself at T'ondrak, in Apahunik' in central Armenia, far from the main Paulician centres on the Anti-Taurus Mountains.[68] The relationship between the Paulicians and T'ondrakec'i therefore seems to be indirect, at least until the movements possibly cross-pollinated in the later 9th century.[69]

The beliefs of the T'ondrakec'i are not straightforward to determine, since, like many heretics, their tenets are generally framed in terms of their deviations from orthodoxy, such as rejection of the cross and icons. Advocates of the adoptionist thesis, such as Frederick Conybeare and Nina Garsoïan, therefore derive their interpretation not from contemporary witnesses on the T'ondrakec'i, but from a much more problematic work, the *Key of Truth*, which cannot reliably be traced further back than the 18th century. To the aforementioned writers though, it represents the survival of ideas dating back to the 9th century, or even earlier.[70] The *Key of Truth* first came to light in 1837 during an investigation by the Armenian Church into a curious group of sectarians in Ark'weli, Shirak province, in what was then Russian Armenia.[71] The group were eventually identified as T'ondrakec'i by contemporary Armenian clerics and, as a result of this identification, the *Key* is frequently considered representative of

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Al crocevia delle civiltà. Richerche su Caucaso e Asia Centrale, eds. Aldo Ferrari, Daniele Guizzo (Venice, 2014), pp. 51–75.

67 On the T'ondrakec'i, see Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*.

68 Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 140–143; 148; Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, pp. 37–41.

69 As argued at Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, pp. 47–54.

70 Conybeare, *Key of Truth*, pp. vi-xiii; cv-cxxxvii; Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 108–111.

71 For the below account, see Conybeare, *Key of Truth*, pp. xxiii-xxx; Leon Arpee, "Armenian Paulicianism and the Key of Truth," *American Journal of Theology* 10 (1906), pp. 267–285; Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, p. 108; Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, pp. 89–96; Anna M. Ohanjanyan, "The Key of Truth and the Problem of the 'Neo-T'ondrakites' at the End of the 19th Century," trans. S. Peter Cowe, *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 20 (2011), pp. 133–135.

Tondrakian and, by extension, Paulician belief. Serious doubts must be raised about this. According to its colophon, the text found at Ark'weli was copied from an earlier manuscript in 1782 by one Yovhannēs Choushdak Vartabedian: a peripatetic dissident who first troubled the Armenian authorities at Moush, before fleeing first to Constantinople, then the Mekhitarist Monastery at San Lazzaro in the Venetian lagoon, and finally back to Constantinople, in each case with trouble hot on his heels.[72] His later proselytising career, which included forced apostasies to Islam, was based primarily at Khnus, whence many of the Ark'weli dissidents apparently originated.[73]

In the eyes of Conybeare, the first editor of the text, the archaic language used in the *Key* implies that its origins should be traced to the 9th century; in fact, he favours the T'ondrakec'i founder Smbat of Zarehawan himself as its author.[74] For him, the extant parts of the text – it was heavily redacted and censored by its possessors shortly before its seizure in an attempt to conceal its heterodoxy – represent an adoptionist Christianity that bore similarities to the Christology of Paul of Samosata and, more importantly, represented the primordial form of Christianity disseminated in Armenia until the intrusion of Greek ideas into the area.[75] This theory had a lukewarm reception among contemporary critics, but alarm bells ring nowadays because Conybeare's analysis is subordinated throughout to his belief that adoptionist churches originally predominated throughout Europe until they were supplanted by the Roman Catholic Church; a disdain for which Conybeare is unable to conceal.[76] His study, in fact, marks the union of the Protestant and Armenian metanarratives of Paulician history.[77] It is not until the admittedly excellent work of Garsoïan

72 Arpee, "Armenian Paulicianism," pp. 269–271. Nersessian calls him Yovhannēs Vahaguni. See Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, pp. 93; 96.

73 For a study of the intersection of Protestant/Tondrakian identities around Khnus at the time, see Yaşar Tolga Cora, "Localizing Missionary Activities: Encounters between Tondrakians, Protestants and Apostolic Armenians in Khnus in the Mid-Nineteenth Century." in *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Societies, Identities and Politics*, eds. Yaşar Tolga Cora, Dzovinar Derderian, Ali Sipahi (London, 2016), pp. 109–132.

74 Conybeare, *Key of Truth*, pp. xxxii.

75 The adoptionist thesis depends predominantly on the emphasis on baptism in the text. See Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, p. 108; Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, pp. 70–71. The linguistic evidence that Conybeare adduced for the text's antiquity has often been questioned. For a discussion, see Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, pp. 89–96.

76 Regard Conybeare's religious background at note 37 above, however. For his anti-Papal invective, see Conybeare, *Key of Truth*, pp. lvi-lvii. See also the collection of articles in Frederick C. Conybeare, *Roman Catholicism as a Factor in European Politics* (London, 1901).

77 The most important Armenocentric perspective on the heresy prior to Conybeare's was the groundbreaking Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer im byzantinischen Kaiserreiche*.

that the focus shifts from an anti-Catholic emphasis to an Armenian one and, to her credit, this emphasis is not teleological or overtly ethno-national, but rather a counterpoint to the Marxist perspective that then predominated in Armenian studies.[78] Implicitly or otherwise though, this scholarship is an exercise in privileging the antiquity and purity of Christian traditions in Armenia, rather than an analysis of the Paulicians or T'ondrakec'i from contemporary sources.

In other words, the *Key of Truth* has traditionally been identified as representative of Paulician belief because this fits traditional understandings of Armenian religious identity.[79] As a result, the 18th- and 19th-century contexts that condition the text have often been elided entirely. We might imagine that a reappraisal of the *Key* in its contemporary setting would paint a very different picture – and this is exactly what we find, for Anna Ohanjanyan's recent reassessment traces the religiosity of the *Key* and the Ark'weli dissidents to western Evangelical and Pentecostal missionaries who were then active in the area.[80] Above all else, irrespective of how we analyse the *Key of Truth* or the *Contra Paulicianos* of Yovhannēs Ōjnec'i, the Armenian sources cannot be convincingly reconciled with either the Byzantine allegation that the Paulicians were dualist or the distinctly Pauline Christianity that the *Didaskalie* and *Letters of Sergios* evoke. The futility of attempting to reconcile the two source traditions is demonstrated by Garsoïan's valiant effort at doing so. She proposed that the adoptionist Paulicians of Armenia transmogrified into dualists in imperial territory due to iconoclast influences, but this only serves to take the relevant Armenian and Greek sources at face value.[81] Our approach, by contrast, must

78 On this Marxist scholarship, see Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy," pp. 87–91. Nersessian's work on the T'ondrakec'i in some respects follows the old Marxist paradigms.

79 Notably, these were not endogenous Armenian understandings, but originated externally, largely with the Anglo-Papalist Conybeare and the Armenian émigré Garsoïan. For criticism of the adoptionist reading of the *Key*, see Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 4; 12–15; Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, pp. 69–71; 89–96.

80 Ohanjanyan, "The Key of Truth," pp. 131–136. See also her book on the *Key* (in Armenian).

81 Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 26; 210–230; Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy," pp. 97–105. Specifically, Garsoïan observes that a *reductio ab absurdum* of certain iconoclast tenets could lead to the doctrines of the "Neo-Paulicians," which is how she terms the dualist Paulicians she considers a specifically Byzantine phenomenon. For instance, the iconoclast tendency (at least as Garsoïan reads it) to stress the divine over the human in Christ could lead to a docetic Christology, whereas the iconoclast rejection of images could lead to a more wholesale rejection of matter. This might be theoretically possible, but the methodology is so reductionist that it abstracts belief and praxis from their socio-religious contexts, effectively making her "Neo-Paulicians" more iconoclastic than the iconoclasts. In any case, as noted several times already, our observation that the Paulicians of our era did not espouse iconoclasm removes the foundation for arguments such as these.

instead base itself on the few reliable pieces of Paulician testimony relevant to the context at hand. If nothing else, the above synopsis should have demonstrated that a reappraisal of the Armenian sources would necessitate a study as lengthy as the present one. This would surely be a worthy endeavour, which might well engage with this one in unexpected ways, in the process developing a more subtle portrayal of heterodoxy across Asia Minor and the Caucasus. It is unlikely, however, that it would appreciably alter our understanding of the most noteworthy period of Paulician history: the era of heresy, persecution, and warfare in the Byzantine Empire.

3 What Is the Paulician Heresy? Traditional Approaches

Thus far, we have seen that existing interpretations of Paulician history have, to a lesser or greater extent, been subordinated to historical concerns which have resonated after the fact, such as traditional conceptions of Armenian Christianity, or, in earlier periods, the claims to sanctity of Catholic and Protestant churches. Understanding Paulician history on its own terms requires a new footing, albeit one whose deviations from the established position are discussed and justified. In aspiring to this aim here, we shall therefore provide a general overview of Paulician history as currently accepted, including an explanation of their relationship with Romanía (the contemporary name for the polity nowadays known as the Byzantine Empire), the Islamic frontier emirates, and the later heresies of the Bogomils and the Cathars. While doing so, particular attention will be paid to signposting points of conflict between the accepted position and the interpretation developed in the following chapters. Insofar as our focus remains on the 9th-century apogee of Paulician power, this will primarily be an account based on the dualist strand of scholarship, rather than the Armenian position. In practice, however, there are few differences between the two, since the lack of Armenian sources for our period means that Armenologists have generally either considered this period of negligible importance for their concerns, or adopted the narrative of the Greek sources while disputing the dualist identification that those sources maintain.[82]

As a result, there is general agreement about the framework of Paulician history in our period. This consensus is primarily dictated by the influence of the *History of the Paulicians* (and indirectly the *Didaskalie*), which has formed

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For criticisms of Garsoïan's hypothesis, not all of which seem entirely fair, see Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 14–15; Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, pp. 47; 69–71.

82 See, for instance, Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 114–130.

the basis for these accounts and consequently will form the core of this overview. As already noted, the *Didaskalie* was only studied in and of itself as a Paulician source by Ludwig, but prior to this date historians had still adopted its testimony through the intermediary of the *History of the Paulicians* or its derivate texts. Since this is the first time we have met both of these works, a few words are necessary on them. The *History of the Paulicians*, authored by the otherwise unknown Peter of Sicily, is evidently a composite text that reworks several earlier documents, including the two Paulician sources, the *Didaskalie* and *Letters of Sergios*. According to internal evidence within the text, it was composed during the heyday of Paulician power, shortly before the death of Chrysocheir in 872, but several glaring inconsistencies undermine this claim. Several critics have considered it a 10th-century forgery and I shall offer additional evidence for doing so in Chapter 1.[83] As for the *Didaskalie*, it does not now survive as a standalone text, but has been amended and reworked in the process of its incorporation into the *History*, in the process losing its authorial voice and, potentially, some episodes or topoi included in the original.[84] This should obviously make us cautious about its reliability as a piece of historical testimony, but, thankfully, Peter of Sicily seems to have remained largely faithful to the original, as is demonstrated in instances where he retains Paulician topoi that contradict the aims of his work. In some instances, he has made more serious alterations to the text, such as by superimposing a chronological framework which it initially lacked.[85] Besides these problems of later revision, another problem intervenes; namely, the fact that the *Didaskalie* was never intended to be a conventionally historical account of the Paulicians at all. Rather, it was a mythologised explanation of the movement's origins written long after the fact in order to make sense of the persecutions enacted by Michael I and Leo V in the 810s. A precise date is impossible to determine, but it seems most likely that it was written in the period 815–830. This explains the recurrent focus on persecution in the *Didaskalie*'s narrative, but it bears reiterating that many of the events it recounts probably never happened. It is for this reason that the account of Paulician history offered in this book differs so considerably from its predecessors. Despite the text's mythic leanings, which have been noted by some, the *Didaskalie*'s version of Paulician history has

83 Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 27–79; Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer im byzantinischen Kaiserreiche*, pp. 1–28.

84 See also Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 149–227.

85 See Appendices.

prevailed for centuries.[86] The consensus is so entrenched that the chronology articulated by Johann Gieseler in 1829 corresponds almost exactly with Paul Lemerle's study of 1973.[87] As a result, the following account is a good guide for the general reader. For ease of reference, all dates attributed to the *didaskaloi* are derived from Lemerle's study.[88]

According to the *History* and the *Didaskalie*, then, the man whom the Paulicians considered their founder was a certain Constantine, who lived during the mid-7th century in Mananalis, a border district in western Armenia not far from the Euphrates and the easternmost approaches to Romanía. This was a time of momentous change in Armenia in particular and the Near East more broadly. The unpredictable reverses of the Byzanto-Sasanian wars had exhausted both combatants by the 630s and left them as easy prey to the new-found zeal of the Arab tribes, so recently unified under the banner of Islam.[89] The Roman emperor Herakleios (610–641), who had only a decade beforehand toppled the Sasanian capital of Ctesiphon with the aid of the Gök Turks, was forced to abandon Syria and Egypt, both recently won back from the Sassanids, and focus his defence on Asia Minor.[90] The stricken Sasanians, meanwhile, collapsed altogether under the Muslim advance, notwithstanding increasingly futile attempts at resistance on the part of Yazdegerd III (632–651), whose heirs fled to Tang China to continue the struggle.[91] Armenia had long been contested by the Byzantines and Sasanians and was often divided into client kingdoms beholden to the two main powers, but, despite this, it had developed its own alphabet, literary traditions, and theological frames of reference.[92] This

86 Ludwig, who might have been the most logical writer to dissent from this, was not interested in Paulician history as such. The mythical qualities of the text are noted in passing by Loos, "Le mouvement paulicien," p. 258; Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 56.

87 See, for instance, Gieseler, "Untersuchen über die Geschichte," p. 101; Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 84.

88 See Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 40–113.

89 For Islam in our period, see Hugh N. Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century*, 3rd ed. (Abingdon, 2016).

90 On the period, see Peter Sarris, *Empires of Faith: The Fall of Rome to the Rise of Islam 500–700* (New York/Oxford, 2011); James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford, 2011).

91 For a general overview, see Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London, 2009).

92 For useful introductions to this period of Armenian history, see Nina G. Garsoïan, "Janus: The Formation of the Armenian Church from the IVth to the VIIth century," in *The Formation of a Millennial Tradition: 1700 Years of Armenian Christian Witness*, ed. Robert F. Taft (Rome, 2004), pp. 79–95; Nina G. Garsoïan, *Interregnum: Introduction to a Study on the Formation of Armenian Identity* (*ca 600–750*) (Leuven, 2012); Tim W. Greenwood,

was in spite of a lack of political integration, since, whether under the nominal suzerainty of outside actors or not, for much of our period Armenia was a fractious land contested by squabbling *nakharar* houses, that is, agnatic kinship groups whose power bases centred on the few fertile plains and valleys interspersed within an otherwise harsh and sparsely populated landscape.[93] The first Islamic forays into the Armenian plateau were limited and sporadic, but from the 650s onward campaigns increased markedly in ambition, aiming at annexation of the region. Armenia, like much of the Near East, would remain weakly Islamicised even into the 9th and 10th centuries, but, unlike elsewhere, Islam struggled to gain lasting ground in the longer term. The Georgian kingdoms to the north too preserved their Christian faith, perhaps partially as a result of their westward-facing position on the Black Sea coast, but the same was not true of Ałovania/Caucasian Albania, even if the conversion of the latter postdates our period.[94] As well as facing a new power from the south, the Transcaucasian peoples also faced a growing threat in the north, the Khazar Khaganate, which had installed itself on the steppe to the north of the Caucasus in the middle of the 7th century, displacing the Gök Turks. The khaganate's influence would remain comparable with that of empire and caliphate throughout the period covered by this book, whether in alliance or in conflict with the powers to the south. Much of its strength was based on its dominance of lucrative north-south trade routes, but it is perhaps best-known today for its unprecedented adoption of Judaism as the state religion.[95]

It might conceivably have been in the context of this changing world that Constantine of Mananalis made the decision to migrate to Byzantine territory, eventually settling at Kibossa, a fortified settlement close to the city of Koloneia in north-eastern Asia Minor.[96] The immediate impulse for his journey

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"Armenian Neighbours (600–1045)," in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire: c.1500–1492*, ed. Jonathan Shepard (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 333–364.

93 Indeed, whether construed in territorial, linguistic, cultural, or religious terms, we might more profitably adopt a "pluralistic and inclusive" approach, thereby speaking of "Armenias" during our period. On this, and the associated methodological and terminological complexities, see Greenwood, "Armenian Neighbours," pp. 333–336.

94 Understanding the area in religious terms is something of a simplification, since despite their predominantly Christian faith, Armenia and Ałovania had much in common with the Iranian world during our period. See Alison M. Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces under Early Islam: Islamic Rule and Iranian Legitimacy in Armenia and Caucasian Albania* (Cambridge, 2017).

95 For Khazaria, see most recently Boris Zhivkov, *Khazaria in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, trans. Daria Manova (Leiden, 2015). Still useful is Mark Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium 600–1025* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 220–241.

96 The Arab threat is invoked by Loos, "Le mouvement," p. 261; Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 61–62.

is, however, related by the *History*: a visit from a prisoner of war recently released from Syria. In recompense for the hospitality Constantine showed him, this visitor, a deacon, gave his host a copy of the books of the Gospel and the Apostle, the latter of which contained the Pauline letters as well as Acts. This gift triggered a spiritual awakening in Constantine, who began spreading his own religious message. Teaching orally, he would accept no other authority than these two books, although later *didaskaloi* were not so inflexible.[97] Quite what he taught the extant text does not tell us. Throughout its duration it remains silent on matters of doctrine, either because this was true of the original text or because Peter of Sicily suppressed this material. In any event, Constantine adopted the name Silvanos (sometimes known as Silas) from the disciple of Paul and introduced himself to his followers as such.[98] It is unclear in the extant text if Constantine already had followers in Mananalis or whether he founded a new community when he reached Kibossa. This, at any rate, was where he founded the second of the Paulician churches, the Church of the Macedonians, in succession to the first: the apostle Paul's Church of Corinth. In total, Constantine-Silvanos led the Paulician community for twenty-seven years (*c*.655–682).[99]

For reasons that remain unclear in our extant text, Constantine's actions came to the attention of the reigning Roman emperor. Due to chronological ambiguities in the *History*'s account, this may have been either Constans II (641–668) or Constantine IV (668–685).[100] It is here that the imperial official Symeon enters the picture. Having received orders to execute Constantine-Silvanos and bring his followers back within the orthodox fold, he lined the *didaskalos* up before his followers and ordered the latter to stone their master. The loyal disciples refused, casting their stones behind their backs, so Symeon resorted to the expedient of picking one of them, Constantine's adoptive son Justos, to stone his father to death, which he did with a single blow.[101] Symeon then attempted the conversion of the Paulician faithful, but his endeavours were unsuccessful and he was forced to condemn the majority to their deaths. After fulfilling his commission, he returned to Constantinople for three years,

97 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 44, pp. 22–23. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 73.

98 Acts 18:5; 2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thes. 1:1.

99 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 93–102, pp. 40–43. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 76–78.

100 For this chronological difficulty, see Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 56–61.

101 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 103–105, pp. 42–45. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 78.

but the events at Kibossa had evidently made a great impression on him, so much so that he fled back in secret and became Constantine's successor as *didaskalos*, terming himself Titos. For three years Symeon-Titos (*c.*685–688) led the Paulicians, until he quarrelled with Justos on the interpretation of the passage Colossians 1:16–17. Justos sought advice on the passage from the Bishop of Koloneia, who promptly informed Justinian II (685–695; 705–711) of the heretical infighting. The emperor, who presided over an expansion of the empire's eastern borders during his first reign, ordered that those Paulicians who remained impenitent be burned *en masse*.[102]

We now enter a shadowy period, during which the enigmatic Paul the Armenian regrouped the Paulician survivors at Episparis, a village which our sources place in the plain of Phanaroia in Paphlagonia, but may actually have been located considerably further east than this. Paul is a difficult figure to interpret: his name and presence at this important crux of Paulician history mark him out as a figure of importance, but he never assumes a new name and is not listed among the *didaskaloi* that the Paulicians venerated.[103] Symeon's true successor, in fact, was Paul's son Gegnesios-Timothy (*c.*718–748), but the succession was disputed by another of Paul's sons, Theodore, who claimed pre-eminence himself. The dispute between the two reportedly endured throughout their lives and was serious enough that Leo III, the emperor best known today for inaugurating the first phase of iconoclasm, found out and ordered Gegnesios to travel to Constantinople for an interview with the patriarch. In the ensuing interrogation, Gegnesios was pronounced orthodox. As our extant text has it, he outwitted the patriarch by subscribing to orthodox formulae while intending something entirely different. After receiving a safe-conduct and returning to Episparis, Gegnesios then fled the empire altogether, returning to Constantine-Silvanos' home district of Mananalis, where he founded the third Paulician church, the Church of the Achaeans. Gegnesios held the role of *didaskalos* for thirty years until he was carried off by the plague.[104]

Gegnesios' career is often interpreted as corroborating the hypothesis that the Paulicians were inherently iconoclastic themselves, or, alternatively, that they formed a de-facto alliance with the iconoclast emperors at one time or

102 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 106–111, pp. 44–47. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 78–80.

103 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 112, pp. 46–47. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 80; *Treatise*, 5–6, pp. 82–83. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 91.

104 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 113–122, pp. 46–49. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 80–81.

another.[105] The above account does not point in this direction, however. If Gegnesios' views were iconoclastic, why would he resort to dissimulation to navigate the interview and why would he flee the empire afterward? In part, the confusion arises because the iconomachy has traditionally been misunderstood; destruction of icons was rare in Romanía and so was the persecution of those that venerated them. These phenomena were largely invented by later iconophile sources, which sought to discredit iconoclasm by characterising it as a violent and despotic manifestation of imperial power.[106] In actuality, for most of its history Byzantine iconoclasm sought to restrict the devotion paid to icons, particularly when this might deflect attention from more appropriate manifestations of the divine, such as the cross or eucharist. Icon veneration had only recently become a widespread practice and for many it was a controversial one.[107] The early stages of iconoclasm are still nebulous and it is unclear if Leo III ever officially instituted it as a matter of policy.[108] The ideology was only brought to its full development by his son Constantine V, who had an interest in theological speculation that extended to writing his own formulations of iconoclast doctrines, which have traditionally received short shrift from critics.[109]

Besides this, Constantine was a commander of note who reversed the century-long trajectory of military affairs by taking the offensive against the caliphate, partially as a result of the unstable conditions which led the 'Abbāsids to supplant the Umayyads in 750. Islamic power had remained in the ascendancy throughout the late 7th and early 8th centuries, launching several attempts to capture Constantinople, the most notable of which failed amid famine and disease early in Leo III's reign (717–718). Since then, the empire's fortunes had improved and Constantine felt able to assert himself on the eastern frontier. In this context too he is commonly linked with the Paulicians, largely as a result of Theophanes the Confessor's comment that their heresy spread throughout Thrace as a result of Constantine's relocation of them from Theodosiopolis (Arabic: Qālīqalā, or Armenian: Karin) and Melitene in the

105 See Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy," pp. 97–105; Barnard, "Paulicians and Iconoclasm," pp. 75–82.

106 Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 5–6; Marie-France Auzépy, *L'Hagiographie et l'Iconoclasme Byzantin: le cas de la Vie d'Etienne le jeune* (Aldershot, 1999).

107 Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History,* pp. 40–68.

108 Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 69–155.

109 For Constantine and his vilification by later writers, see Paul Speck, *Ich bin's nicht, Kaiser Konstantin ist es gewesen* (Bonn, 1990).

750s.[110] Here too we must pause and exercise caution, since forced relocations of this sort are often driven by expediency or necessity, rather than favour or alliance. Moreover, numerous other historians refer to the same events without mentioning Paulicians, instead suggesting that the relocation was merely that of Armenian Miaphysites. As we shall come to see, the few explicit links between Constantine V and the Paulicians arise not from contemporary sources, but from iconodule accounts written after the fact.

Returning to the *Didaskalie*'s account, after Gegnesios' demise his son Zacharias was forced to contest the leadership of the Paulician community with Joseph, the progeny of an illicit union who had been abandoned at birth. The resulting dispute grew so heated that Zacharias almost killed Joseph by striking him with a stone, in an event that evokes memories of Justos' stoning of Constantine-Silvanos. Despite his injuries, it was Joseph (*c.*748–778) who eventually prevailed, demonstrating a greater capability for leadership that was shown above all when the two rivals fled Armenia and led their communities back into Romanía. Quite when they did so is unclear, but their actions are conventionally linked to the imposition of a harsh new tax regimen on Armenia by the Muslim authorities.[111] The sudden arrival of an Islamic army during this migration drove Zacharias to panic and, although he saved his own skin by flight, his disciples were slain. For this reason, he was known to posterity "as not a true shepherd."[112] Joseph, on the other hand, outwitted his Muslim pursuers by claiming he was migrating to find pasture. When they left, he proceeded unhindered to Episparis. Joseph adopted the Pauline name Epaphroditos and, as in the case of his predecessors before him, he suffered imperial harassment, eventually fleeing the besieged Episparis for Antioch in Pisidia, where he died at the turn of the 9th century.[113] During his career, Joseph established the fourth Paulician church, that of the Philippians, although it is unclear whether this corresponded to a fixed location (located at either Episparis or Antioch in Pisidia) or a group of people. His death marks the end of the *Didaskalie* proper, but the *History of the Paulicians* continues its account to cover the career of the

110 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 429, l. 18–22. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 593.

111 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 123–124, pp. 48–49. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 81–82; Loos, "Le mouvement," p. 265.

112 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 125, pp. 50–51. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 82.

113 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 125–129, pp. 48–51. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 82–83.

next *didaskalos* Sergios-Tychikos.[114] Some of this information stems from the *Letters of Sergios* and some seems to be of Peter of Sicily's invention, whereas some episodes are conceivably drawn from independent sources of Paulician testimony.[115]

To this point, we have no corroboration for any of these events in Byzantine sources. As evocative as this Paulician account is, there is little reason to accept it as historically accurate. Most notably, in a hundred and eighty years (*c*.655–835) the beleaguered Paulicians had only seven leaders, whereas nineteen emperors and twenty-four caliphs reigned during the same interval.[116] Evidently, the surviving narrative is primarily mythical rather than historical. Similar problems arise with references to Paulicians prior to the 9th century in Byzantine sources. The only references to them in the 8th century come from 9th-century sources, such as Theophanes the Confessor's reference to the relocations to Thrace, or the *Third Antirrhetikos* of Patriarch Nikephoros I (805–813; not to be confused with his namesake emperor), which claims that many iconoclasts adopted Paulician beliefs after icon veneration was reestablished at the Second Council of Nikaea in 787.[117] Both of these writers supported the persecution of Paulicians at one time or another and therefore had an axe to grind. Once we reach the 9th century, more reliable references to Paulicians start to emerge. Theophanes' *Chronographia*, for instance, castigates Emperor Nikephoros I (802–811) for, among many other things, showing patronage to the Paulicians and the Athinganoi, a heretical movement active in western Asia Minor (Theophanes specifies Phrygia and Lykaonia) that seems to have incorporated Judaic and astrological practices.[118] Whether Nikephoros was responsible for it or not, this period did see a dramatic upsurge in Paulician fortunes under Joseph's successor Sergios-Tychikos (800/01-834/35), who is

114 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 132–181, pp. 50–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 83–91.

115 See Appendix 2.

116 Jonathan Shepard, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c.500–1492* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 906–907; 917.

117 Nikephoros, *Third Antirrhetikos*, 68, *Patrologia Graeca* 100, col. 501.

118 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 488, l. 22–25. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 671; Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy,* p. 123; Barnard, "Paulicians and Iconoclasm," pp. 78–79; Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 80. The Athinganoi have sometimes been identified as the precursors of the Roma people, but the genetic evidence does not support this. On this, and the Athinganoi more generally, see Joshua Starr, "An Eastern Christian Sect: The Athinganoi," *Harvard Theological Review* 29:2 (1936), pp. 93–106; Paul Speck, "Die vermeintliche Häresie der Athinganoi," *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 47 (1997), pp. 37–50; Isabel Mendizabal et. al., "Reconstructing the Population History of European Romani from Genome-Wide Data," *Current Biology* 22:24 (2012), pp. 2342–2349.

usually recognized as their most successful leader. He founded their fifth, sixth, and seventh churches: the Church of the Colossians at Argaous, the Church of the Ephesians at Mopsuestia, and the Church of the Laodikaeans, among a shadowy people called the *Kynochoritae*. As in many previous instances though, Sergios' leadership of the community was contested. In fact, he was the challenger himself, supplanting the authority of Joseph's chosen successor Baanes (the Greek transliteration of the Armenian name Vahan). It is unclear how long the conflict between the two persisted; the *History* portrays the quarrel enduring even among their followers after Sergios' death, but this is far from certain.[119] In a similar vein, we must be sceptical of Theophanes' implication of the Paulicians in various plots during the reign of Michael I (811–813), who supplanted Nikephoros I's mortally wounded heir Staurakios (811). As Theophanes would have it, a plot to replace Michael with the surviving sons of Constantine V was concocted by the "Paulicians, Athinganoi, Iconoclasts and Tetradites," but this attribution of blame best belongs to the realms of conspiracy theory.[120]

Be that as it may, the reign of Michael I was a troubled time for the empire, which once again saw iconoclasm gaining ground in the capital. In the collective Byzantine imagination, the fate of the empire had long been linked with the piety of its rulers and, for some at least, the successes of the great iconoclast Constantine V lived long in the memory. Recent events told a rather different tale. The regency of Eirene (regent 780–90; reigned 797–802) for her son Constantine VI (780–797) saw the restoration of icon veneration against the wishes of the army, which set the tone for a period of discord and instability.[121] Factional disputes were the order of the day between Eirene and her son after Constantine had come of age. The latter's attempts to replace his wife Maria with his mistress Theodote created shockwaves in the ecclesiastical hierarchy that would not be resolved until the reign of Michael I.[122] Eventually, Constantine's unpopularity became such that Eirene was able to reestablish her superiority, blinding her son in 797. The most conspicuous product of Eirene's resulting struggle to legitimate herself is Charlemagne's (768–814) coronation as Roman Emperor in 800, but besides this her rule saw a resurgence

119 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 130–131; 170–174, pp. 50–51; 62–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 83; 89–90.

120 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 496, l. 10. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 679–680.

121 Brubaker and Haldon also emphasise the role of bishops in opposing initial attempts to hold the council. See Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, p. 269.

122 Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 290–291; 360–363.

in Islamic fortunes on the eastern frontier driven by the activity of Hārūn al-Rashīd (786–809), who was known to posterity as a *ghāzī* caliph for his raiding of Roman territory.[123] The Islamic menace abated with his death, as the civil war between his sons al-Amīn (809–813) and al-Ma'mūn (813–833) destabilised the caliphate into the 830s.[124] The empire's respite was only partial, however, since the decline of Muslim aggression only coincided with the advent of a more proximate danger, the Bulgar Khan Krum (*c.*800–814). The Bulgars had established themselves in the Balkans in the late 7th century and, although their fortunes waxed and waned, in their moments of strength they were more than a match for the empire.[125] One such high point was the reign of the formidable Krum, whose defeat of Nikephoros I at Pliska cost the latter his life and left his son Staurakios at death's door.[126] Staurakios' successor Michael I suffered a similarly disastrous defeat at Krum's hands at Versinikia (813), after which he abdicated in favour of Leo V, who managed to stabilise the Balkans after Krum's sudden death.[127]

Where the Paulicians are concerned, Michael I and Leo V are most notable for conducting the first verifiable persecution of them in Byzantine territory. We shall discuss these events in considerable detail later, but for the present it suffices to say that the sources are not clear about how many Paulicians were killed, although Byzantine initiatives seem to have fallen mainly on the Armeniakon thema.[128] According to the *History*, these events led some of Sergios' followers to conduct reprisals against the Roman officials responsible, after which they fled to the Emirate of Melitene where they inaugurated an alliance with the powers of Islam.[129] This account has been accepted by many authorities, but here it will be argued that the *History* is untrustworthy on this

123 Michael D. Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven, 1996), pp. 99–106.

124 Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, p. 289; Signes Codoñer, *The Emperor Theophilos*, p. 181.

125 For Bulgaria in this period, see Pananos Sophoulis, *Byzantium and Bulgaria, 775–831* (Leiden/Boston, 2012).

126 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 489, l. 17 – p. 491, l. 17. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 672–673.

127 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 500, l. 10 – p. 502, l. 1. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 684–685; Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 502, l. 1 – p. 503, l. 5. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 685–686.

128 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 494, l. 33 – p. 495, l. 15. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 678.

129 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 175–178, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 90.

point. A formal concord with Melitene could only have been established in the 840s and this is corroborated by the lack of reference to Paulicians in the area during the intervening period. It is admittedly true that some Paulicians displayed aggressive intent towards the Byzantines in the early part of the 9th century – in his letters Sergios notes that he attempted to stop his followers taking Roman prisoners – but it is unclear whether this was in response to persecution or not.[130] It does not seem that there were Paulicians among the followers of Thomas the Slav, a shadowy personage (possibly a former Byzantine general) who had in one way or another ended up at the 'Abbāsid court, where al-Ma'mūn provided him with troops to install himself as emperor in Leo V's stead.[131] Leo was soon supplanted by Michael II (820–829), who eventually defeated Thomas' army in 823. Later histories mention Paulicians among Thomas' forces, but this allegation is not supported by contemporary sources. Besides this, there are no explicit references to the punishment of Paulicians during Michael II's reign, so it is unclear whether he continued their persecution or not. The most likely eventuality is that persecution continued, albeit in a localised, infrequent, and uncoordinated way under both Michael and his son and successor Theophilos (829–842). It was during the reign of the latter that the *didaskalos* Sergios died (*c*.834/35), apparently murdered near Argaous in the borderlands between caliphate and empire.[132] The Paulician presence in this area must have been minimal at the time, since Theophilos campaigned extensively in the east during his reign and if a hostile insurrection had been launched against the empire, we would expect him to have taken actions against it, yet we never hear of this. The *History* also tells us that Baanes' followers were massacred by Sergios' devotees after their master's death, but the account unfortunately lacks specifics.[133] It does at least seem clear that Sergios had no direct successor as *didaskalos*, with religious authority instead invested equally among his disciples, the *synekdemoi*.[134]

Theophilos' death marked a further deterioration of fortunes for Paulicians within the empire. His wife Theodora, regent (842–855) for their young son

130 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 157, pp. 58–59. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 87.

131 Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 386–388; Signes Codoñer, *The Emperor Theophilos*, pp. 183–189.

132 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 179–181, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 90–91.

133 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 173–174, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 90.

134 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 182–183, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 91.

Michael III (842–867), not only reestablished the veneration of icons, but also restarted the persecutions that seem to have largely abated under Michael II and Theophilos.[135] This persecution was a heavy-handed and indiscriminate affair that later Byzantine writers considered regrettable and counterproductive. It is not difficult to see why. *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV tells us some hundred thousand were killed, but this seems to be an exaggeration motivated by the fallout of Theodora's actions. It was this persecution that drove Karbeas, whose father numbered among the slain, to flee the empire and present himself to 'Amr al-Aqṭa', the Emir of Melitene.[136] The latter was among the most daring campaigners in the region after the deaths of both Theophilos and al-Mu'taṣim (833–842) and it seems certain that he was instrumental in establishing the Paulicians close to Melitene, first at Argaous and Amara and then later at Tephrikē. 'Amr and Karbeas habitually campaigned in concert and their raids, which often focused on seizing livestock and taking prisoners, plagued the empire until the former was slain at the battle of Lalakaon/Poson in 863 by a Roman army under Petronas, Theodora's brother. Although our Byzantine sources are silent about it, Karbeas may have met with the same fate, since al-Mas'ūdī describes him as perishing in the same year in his *Murūj al-dhahab wa ma'ādin al-jawāhir* (*The Meadows of Gold and Mine of Gems*), but the cause is far from certain because the Baghdādi polymath gives no specifics about his death.[137] In any case, the events of 863 seem to have stabilised matters for the empire, since letters from the patriarch Photios imply that Karbeas' successor Chrysocheir (literally, 'Golden Hand') may have been a Byzantine client for a time.[138] This did not last, however, and Chrysocheir went on to bedevil the empire, particularly during the reign of Michael III's successor Basil I (867–886). As Genesios has it, Chrysocheir wished to rule the empire's eastern provinces himself and we must regard this aim as a distinct possibility, particularly because he seems to have thrown off Islamic oversight and campaigned of his own accord. In any case, Chrysocheir's threat ceased with his death at the

135 Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 447–452.

136 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:16, pp. 236–237.

137 For Lalakaon/Poson, see Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:25, pp. 254–261. For Karbeas' death, see al-Mas'ūdī, *Les prairies d'or*, ed. and trans. Charles Barbier de Meynard, 9 vols, vol. 8 (Paris, 1874), p. 75. English translation: *Masudi: The Meadows of Gold*, eds. Paul Lunde, Caroline Stone (Abingdon, 2010), p. 319.

138 Photios, *Epistulae*, in *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, eds. Basil Laourdas, Leendert G. Westerink, 6. vols (Leipzig, 1983–1988), *Ep.* 33–40, vol. 1, pp. 86–89; *Ep*. 57, vol. 1, p. 104; *Ep*. 80, vol. 1, p. 121; *Ep*. 134, vol. 1, pp. 176–178.

battle of Bathyryax in 872, after which his head was removed to endure Basil's retribution.[139] This marked the eclipse of the Paulicians as an effective military power, although Tephrikē was only taken in 878/79.[140]

As noted at the outset, however, Paulicians and Byzantines were not irreconcilable, despite their history of antagonism. It is in this regard that we see Diakonitzes, the companion who shielded the mortally wounded Chrysocheir at Bathyryax, leading a Paulician unit during Nikephoros Phokas' campaign in the thema of Langobardia during 885/86.[141] This reference aside, Paulicians drop from view during the late 9th and early 10th centuries. Scattered allusions to them occur again during the mid-10th century, when hagiographical and epistolary sources mention them across Asia Minor and northern Syria. It is in this vein that John I Tzimiskes (969–976) removed a particularly troublesome group from the environs of Antioch to Philippopolis to bolster the empire's restless northern border (*c.*970–972).[142] This act seems to be linked to contemporary turmoil in Bulgaria, where the Byzantine stratagem of inciting the Rus' warlord Svyatoslav of Kiev to attack the Bulgars had spectacularly backfired and left Svyatoslav in possession of much of their lands, with Philippopolis suffering the brunt of his rage in 970.[143] Alexios I's later attempts at mobilizing and then converting Paulicians was also focused on communities at Philippopolis and this Balkan connection has traditionally been invoked to explain the transmission of dualist ideas to the Bogomils. The key source in this regard is a letter written on behalf of the patriarch Theophylaktos Lekapenos (933–956) to Peter of Bulgaria (927–969), composed in response to the spread of a new heresy in Bulgaria which was eventually identified as a mixture of "Manichaeanism and Paulianism."[144] That description does not necessarily

139 Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 96–103; Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur liber quo Vita Basilii Imperatoris amplectitur*, 41–44, ed. and trans. Ihor Ševčenko (Berlin/Boston, 2011), pp. 148–159.

140 Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 104–108.

141 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, pp. 244–245, l. 16–18.

142 John Zonaras, *Ioannis Zonarae epitome historiarum*, 17:1, ed. Ludwig A. Dindorf, 5 vols, vol. 4 (Leipzig, 1871), pp. 92–93. Anna Komnene, *Annae Comnenae Alexias*, 14:8, eds. Diether R. Reinsch, Athanasios Kambylis (Berlin/New York, 2001), pp. 454–458. English translation: *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth A.S. Dawes (London, 1928), pp. 384–385.

143 Leo the Deacon, *Leonis Diaconi Caloënsis Historiae libri decem*, 6:10, ed. Charles B. Hase (Bonn, 1828), p. 105. English translation: *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century. Introduction, Translation and Annotations,* eds. and trans. Alice-Mary Talbot, Denis F. Sulivan, George T. Dennis, Stamatina McGrath (Washington, D.C., 2005), p. 155.

144 Theophylaktos Lekapenos, "L'epistola sui Bogomili," p. 312. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 98–99.

suggest a Paulician identification, but the anathemata which follow the letter do, since they focus on charges of dualism and the repudiation of the Paulician *didaskaloi* and their alleged forerunners.

It is ultimately unclear whether the heretics who worried Peter were Paulicians, Bogomils, or something more obscure, but it is evident that heresy was a concern in his Bulgaria. The late 9th century was an era of great missionary activity in eastern Europe, which saw the Moravians and Bulgars brought within the Christian fold.[145] Bulgaria in particular was highly prized by the churches of Constantinople and Rome and, after much toing and froing, Khan Boris (852–889) opted for the former, adopting the Christian name Michael in the process.[146] Correct belief remained a concern, however, and it was in Peter's reign that Cosmas the Priest places the activity of the priest Bogomil (literally, 'worthy of God's compassion'), who gave the heresy its name. Cosmas tells us rather more about the correct interpretation of doctrine than the Bogomils' views, although he does state that they deny that God made heaven or earth, thereby attributing to them a dualism similar to that levelled against the Paulicians.[147] While the heresy seemingly originated in Bulgaria, it spread into imperial lands in the following century, or at least this is how the conventional narrative goes.[148] Arguably the first source to describe it within the

145 Moravia was initially proselytised by the Byzantine missionary brothers Constantine/Cyril and Methodios, but the latter became Archbishop of the Moravian church through Papal support. On Moravia in our period, see Florin Curta, "The History and Archaeology of Great Moravia: An Introduction," *Early Medieval Europe* 17:3 (2009), pp. 238–247; Maddalena Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia: Papal Power and Political Reality* (Leiden, 2013).

146 On the conflict between Photios and Pope Nicholas I which underlies much of this rivalry, see Francis Dvornik, *The Photian Schism: History and Legend* (Cambridge, 1948). For Photios and Boris, see Despina Stratoudaki White, Joseph R. Berrigan, *The Patriarch and the Prince: The Letter of Patriarch Photios of Constantinople to Khan Boris of Bulgaria* (Brookline, 1982).

147 Cosmas the Priest, *Kosma presviteri v slavjanski literaturach*, ed. Jurij K. Begunov (Sofia, 1973). English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 118. The pastoral emphasis of Cosmas' work is particularly emphasised by Mirela Ivanova, who notes that the text is preserved exclusively in North Slavic manuscripts which draw primarily from its didactic portions. For Ivanova, the *Discourse* is important precisely because it overlaps minimally with Byzantine texts and heresiological topoi and engages with popular religion on the ground. Accordingly, it may act as a starting point for an analysis which considers Bulgarian and Byzantine variants of "Bogomilism" as independent phenomena. See Mirela Ivanova, ""Bogomilism" and Cosmas' Discourse against Heretics in European History," (Forthcoming). My thanks to the author for sharing the working paper with me.

148 The date and reliability of Cosmas' work has long been questioned, largely because the earliest extant manuscript dates to the 15th century. For an overview of the difficulties of

empire is a letter of Euthymios of the Periblepton (written at some point in the mid-11th century), which describes a group known as the Phundagiagitae in the Opsikion thema, but as Bogomils in the thema of the Kibyrrhaiotai and throughout the west.[149] Both Euthymios and Cosmas emphasise the asceticism of these heretics, who devoted much of their day to fasting and praying. In this respect they differed considerably from the Paulicians, who are never accused of ascetic traits by Byzantine writers.

Besides this, another crucial difference between the Paulicians and Bogomils merits attention. While the Paulicians are commonly portrayed as absolute dualists, that is, they believed that the good and evil principles originated independently of one another, accounts of Bogomil cosmology suggest they predominantly espoused mitigated dualism (at least initially), a doctrine which holds that the evil principle was a fallen creation of the good God who eventually rebelled against his master.[150] For these reasons, the relationship between the Paulicians and Bogomils is often considered indirect.[151] By the

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dating the text, with references to relevant Eastern European bibliography, see Francis J. Thomson, "Cosmas of Bulgaria and his Discourse against the Heresy of Bogomil," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 54:2 (1976), pp. 263–267; Marcel Dando, "Peut-on avancer de 240 ans la date de composition du traité de Cosmas le prêtre contre les Bogomiles?," *Cahiers d'études Cathares* 34 (1983), pp. 3–25; vol. 35 (1984), pp. 3–21. The 10th-century dating of the text is generally upheld, including by Ivanova above. As a result, a revised portrayal of the Bogomils might rest on untangling their respective portrayals in Bulgarian and Byzantine sources and determining whether these relate to a single movement. Angold, for instance, thinks it entirely possible that they do not. See Angold, *Church and Society*, p. 476.

149 I am sceptical that this source relates to Bogomilism as conventionally understood. Euthymios of the Peribleptos, *Epistula*, p. 62. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 157–158. Antonio Rigo has convincingly argued that Euthymios wrote at least three works on the Phundagiagitae, thereby drawing into question Ficker's assumption of a single underlying text in his edition. A new edition of the tradition is accordingly a desideratum. See Antonio Rigo, "Les premières sources byzantines sur le Bogomilisme et les œuvres contre les Phoundagiagites d'Euthyme de la Péribleptos," in *Evropeĭskiĭat ĭugoiztok prez vtorata polovina na X – nachaloto na XI vek: istoriĭa i kultura*, ed. Vasil Giuzelev, Georgi N. Nikolov (Sofia, 2015), pp. 528–551.

150 There is some dissension in secondary writings over whether Cosmas the Priest attributed mitigated or absolute dualism to the early Bogomils. Runciman, for instance, favours absolute while Obolensky and most writers after him prefer mitigated. See Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, p. 79; Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, pp. 122–125; Hamilton, "Introduction," in *Hugo Eteriano: Contra Patarenos*, pp. 35–37; Stoyanov, *The Other God*, pp. 160–161. Some Bogomil churches are believed to have adopted absolute dualism in the 12th century. See Hamilton, "Introduction," in *Hugo Eteriano: Contra Patarenos*, pp. 54–56; Stoyanov, *The Other God*, pp. 198–200.

151 This tendency is rarely explicit in the work of Runciman and Obolensky since both considered Paulician and Messalian influences on the Bogomils equally prominent and

end of the 11th century, both movements troubled Alexios I (1081–1118), whose measures against them are detailed in the *Alexiad*, a eulogistic biography of the emperor penned by his daughter Anna Komnene. While sources of the First Crusade attest the continued presence of Paulicians (generally termed Publicani) in the east, primarily in the employ of Muslim commanders, Alexios' dealings with them are focused in the west.[152] After the Paulician contingent under Xantas and Kouleon abandoned Alexios' army in the wake of the Norman Robert Guiscard's victory at Dyrrhachium, Anna notes the subjugation of the Paulicians of Philippopolis by her father, who disarmed them, confiscated their property, imprisoned their leaders, and drove their womenfolk from their homes. These acts so enraged the Paulician Traulos, a member of Alexios' own staff who had four sisters among the diaspora, that he broke with the empire and fled north from Philippopolis to Beliatoba, whence he

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therefore explained the ascetic characteristics of the latter as arising from Messalian intercourse. See Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, pp. 67–68; 87–91; Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, pp. 111–117; 123–125; 128–129. The subsequent diminution of Paulician-Bogomil links is not solely informed by the distinction between absolute and mitigated dualism, since other factors played a part, including the Paulicians' lack of asceticism, their militarism, and their limited interest in missionary activity after their Anatolian heyday. See, for example, Hamilton, "Introduction," in *Hugo Eteriano: Contra Patarenos*, pp. 34–37; Stoyanov, *The Other God*, pp. 161–166; Andrew P. Roach, *The Devil's World: Heresy and Society 1100–1320* (Harlow, 2005), pp. 60–62. In certain cases, Bogomil dualism is seen less as an evolution of earlier heresies during the Christianization of Bulgaria and more so as a product of indigenous currents within Bulgar or proto-Bulgar religious culture, including elements as diverse as those listed by Georgi Minczew: "Early Christian dualist thought (above all Gnosticism), Iranian dualism, Thracian Orphic mysteries, Manichaeism and later neo-Manichaean doctrines – Massalianism and Paulicianism." Many of these links are traced to a period where proto-Bulgar elements are either believed to have neighboured powers with a strong tradition of dualism, such as Sasanian Persia and the Manichaean Uyghur Khaganate, or have been influenced by peoples who did (the Pechenegs are sometimes placed in this role). As a result, the conditioning factors which eventually informed Bogomil spirituality are often pushed back into the early phases of the First Bulgarian Empire, if not beforehand. On these and similar emphases, see Georgi Minczew, "Remarks on the Letter of the Patriarch Theophylact to Tsar Peter in the Context of Certain Byzantine and Slavic Anti-Heretic Texts," *Studia Ceranea* 3 (2013), pp. 114–115; Fumagalli, *L'eresia dei Pauliciani*, pp. 147–154. For Stoyanov, the above factors remain conjectural and the more immediate causal impulses are the religious dislocation of Bulgaria in the era of Christianization, the influence of canonical and apocryphal texts, and finally the appeal and associated anxieties of monasticism and the apostolic ideal. Fine, meanwhile, proposes that Bogomil origins were more or less independent of the Paulicians, while also eschewing purported dualist influences on early Slavic religion. See John Van Antwerp Fine, Jr., "The Size and Significance of the Bulgarian Bogomil Movement," *East European Quarterly* 11:4 (1977), pp. 385–412.

152 On crusader sources for the Paulicians/Publicani, see Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy,* pp. 14–16.

raided imperial lands, inciting the pagan Pechenegs south of the Danube in support.[153] In 1086 this makeshift alliance inflicted a crushing defeat on the Romans near Beliatoba, in which both generals, the Grand Domestikos Gregory Pakourianos and Nikolaos Branas, were slain.[154] The affair bears unmistakable similarities with a rebellion a decade or so earlier during the reign of Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078–1081), when the Paulician Lekas also allied with the Pechenegs, with whom he was related by marriage. We know rather less about this earlier attempt at secession, except that Lekas was eventually reconciled with the empire, somewhat surprisingly considering that he allegedly murdered Michael, Bishop of Serdica, while the latter was wearing his vestments.[155] Returning to the 1080s and Alexios' reign, Nilus of Calabria was condemned at Constantinople for doctrines that Garsoïan identifies with her adoptionist brand of Paulician thought, although this interpretation is rarely followed.[156] Almost three decades later, while Alexios happened to be in the environs of Philippopolis resisting a Cuman incursion (1115), he encountered Paulicians once more, attempting to convert their leaders while the Cumans were still distant. Of the three most prominent figures, he succeeded in converting Kouleon, who was perhaps the same figure who held the command at Dyrrhachium, but failed in the case of Kousinos and Pholos, who were confined until their deaths.[157]

153 On Dyrrhachium, see Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, 5:3, pp. 146–149. Translation: *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, p. 120. On Alexios' response and Traulos' rebellion, see Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, 6:2–4, pp. 173–174. Translation: *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, pp. 139–143. On the events of this paragraph, see also Ani Dancheva-Vasileva, "La Commune des Pauliciens à Plovdiv pendant le Moyen-Age," *Revue Bulgare d'Histoire* 2001:1–2 (2001), pp. 27–51; Dragoljub Dragojlović, "The History of Paulicianism on the Balkan Peninsula," *Balcanica* 5 (1975), pp. 238–239.

154 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, 6:14, pp. 199–202. Translation: *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, pp. 164–167.

155 Our main source is Michael Attaleiates, who is followed closely by the Continuator of Skylitzes. Michael does not mention the murder of the Bishop of Serdica, whereas he only terms Lekas a Roman, unlike the Continuator who calls him "a Paulician of Philippopolis." See Michael Attaleiates, *The History*, 35:11, eds. Anthony Kaldellis, Dimitris Krallis (Cambridge, MA/London, 2012), pp. 550–551; John Skylitzes Continuatus, *Byzantium in the Time of Troubles: The Continuation of the Chronicle of John Skylitzes (1057–1079)*, 7:9, eds. Eric McGeer, John W. Nesbitt (Brill, 2020), pp. 186–187.

156 Nina G. Garsoïan, "L'abjuration du moine Nil de Calabre," *Byzantinoslavica* 55 (1974), pp. 12–27. For the alternative view which considers Nilus as a pseudo-Nestorian, see Jean Gouillard, ed., "Le Synodikon de l'orthodoxie: édition et commentaire," *Travaux et mémoires* 2 (1967), pp. 202–206; Angold, *Church and Society*, pp. 477–478.

157 On Alexios' attempted conversion of Kouleon and his colleagues, see Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, 14:9; pp. 458–460. Translation: *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, pp. 387–389. On Kouleon, see also Dancheva-Vasileva, "La Commune des Pauliciens," pp. 47–48.

In spite of the above, it seems that the Bogomils posed the greater threat during Alexios' reign. His most notable intervention against them was the trial and execution of the elderly Bogomil heresiarch Basil (*c.*1099), whom Alexios duped into disclosing his heresy while a secretary was recording his words.[158] Basil and his most unrepentant followers were later consigned to the flames, which marks a considerable difference from the emperor's patient attempts at bringing the three aforementioned Paulicians within the orthodox fold at the end of his reign.[159] By this time Bogomils were subject to a similar opprobrium that Paulicians suffered centuries earlier, whereas the Paulician threat seems to have been considered minimal, perhaps because by this time they were more easily identifiable and had less zeal for missionary activity. Alexios' reign marked the peak of the Bogomil scare and, barring some later trials for Bogomilism in the reign of Manuel I (1143–1180), where the allegation of heresy is often characterised as politically motivated, Byzantine sources show little indication that Bogomils remained a threat, although they remained influential in the Balkans, where later churches, notably in Bosnia and Macedonia, are often considered to be descended from them.[160]

The extent of the Bogomils' influence on western medieval heresy has been a recurrent topic of dispute. It used to be widely believed that Bogomil ideas had underlain many of the heretical ideas advanced in the west throughout the 11th and 12th centuries, but that view has fallen from favour due to the lack of references to dualism in this period.[161] Their presence in the west only

158 For the dates of the trial (the likely *termini* are 1096–1100), see Antonio Rigo, "Il processo del Bogomilo Basilio (1099 c.a.): una riconsiderazione," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 58 (1992), pp. 194–200.

159 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, 15:8–10, pp. 485–493. Translation: *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, pp. 412–418. The literature on Alexios, Basil, and the Bogomils is extensive. Among many others, see Rigo, "Il processo del Bogomilo Basilio," pp. 185–212; Dion Smythe, "Alexios I and the Heretics: the Account of Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*," in *Alexios I Komnenos: I Papers*, eds. Margaret Mullett, Dion Smythe (Belfast, 1996), pp. 235–244; Jonathan Shepard, "Hard on Heretics, Light on Latins: The Balancing-Act of Alexios I Komnenos," *Travaux et mémoires* 16 (2010), pp. 765–777.

160 On Bogomils in Manuel's reign, see Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos 1143–1180* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 277–278; 283–284; Angold, *Church and Society*, pp. 78–82. For Bogomils in the Balkans, see Stoyanov, *The Other God*, pp. 222–228; 250–260.

161 For the study which undermined early dualist identifications, see Robert I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent* (London, 1977), pp. 23–45. The sole source which possibly indicates dualism in this period is the *Letter of Héribert*. On this, see Guy Lobrichon, "The Chiaroscuro of Heresy: Early Eleventh-Century Aquitaine as Seen from Auxerre," in *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000*, eds. Thomas F. Head, Richard Landes (Ithaca/London, 1992), pp. 80–103; Claire Taylor, "The Letter of Héribert of Périgord as a Source for Dualist Heresy in the Society of Early Eleventh-Century Aquitaine," *Journal of Medieval History* 26:4 (2000), pp. 313–349.

becomes explicit, if controversial, when we meet the most well-known dualist heretics of the Middle Ages: the Cathars, or good men, who are best known for their influence in the Languedoc, but were also active in northern Italy. Due to the abundance of surviving inquisition records from the Languedoc, the dualist creed of these heretics is well known today, but where these beliefs originated is less secure. Decisive testimony would seem to be provided by the ordination of Cathars by the Bogomil bishop Niketas at a council in Saint-Félix-de-Caraman (dated variously to 1167 or 1174), in an affair which is often interpreted as an attempt to impose an absolute dualist creed. Unfortunately, the charter in question no longer survives and is only preserved in a later history by Guillaume Besse, who had, among other things, a reputation for forgery. Moreover, the charter itself was not contemporary, but instead made some fifty years after the events it purported to describe.[162] Given these facts, healthy scepticism is required, but a second document, the *De heresi catharorum in Lombardia*, corroborates the background of the Saint-Félix council on many points.[163] A view founded on these sources therefore suggests that Bogomil influence on the Cathars was crucial during the 12th century. An alternative

162 The balance of evidence suggests that Besse's transcription is that of a genuine medieval document, although how this is to be interpreted is another matter. Guillaume Besse, *Histoire des ducs, marquis et comtes de Narbonne* (Paris, 1660), pp. 324–325; 483–486. For the critical edition of the document, see "Édition critique de la Charte de Niquinta selon les trois versions connues," ed. David Zbíral, in *1209–2009 Cathares: une histoire à pacifier*, ed. Anne Brenon (Portet-sur-Garonne, 2010), pp. 47–52. English translation: *Heresy and Inquisition in France, 1200–1300*, eds. John H. Arnold, Peter Biller (Manchester, 2016), pp. 17–19. On its interpretation, see Antoine Dondaine, "Les actes du concile albigeois de Saint-Félix de Caraman," *Miscellania Giovanni Mercati 5, Studi e Testi* 125 (1946), pp. 324–355; Bernard Hamilton, "The Cathar Council of Saint-Félix Reconsidered," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 48 (1978), pp. 23–53; Monique Zerner, ed., *L'histoire du Catharisme en discussion: Le 'Concile' de Saint-Félix (1167)* (Nice, 2001); Monique Zerner, "Mise au point les cathares devant l'histoire et retour sur l'histoire du catharisme en discussion: le débat sur la charte de Niquinta n'est pas clos," *Journal des Savants* 2 (2006), pp. 253–273. Within the document, Niketas preaches a sermon in which he makes reference to the "seven churches of Asia." Hamilton argued that Niketas is referring to the seven Paulician churches rather than the seven churches of *Revelation* here, but I prefer the alternate view, largely because there is no reason that the churches of Corinth, Macedonia, Achaea etc. should be placed within Asia Minor once awareness of the origins of Paulician history had been lost. See Bernard Hamilton, "The Cathars and the Seven Churches of Asia," in *Byzantium and the West c.850-c.1200*, ed. James Howard-Johnston (Amsterdam, 1988), pp. 269–295.

163 "La Hiérarchie cathare en Italie, I: le 'De Heresi catharorum in Lombardia'," ed. Antoine Dondaine, *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 19 (1949), pp. 306–312. English translation: *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, eds. and trans. Walter L. Wakefield, Austin P. Evans (New York, 1969), pp. 160–167.

interpretation has, however, emerged more recently, according to which heretics in the Languedoc embraced dualism without outside stimulus during the tumultuous years of the Albigensian Crusade (1209–1229) by adopting the heretical labels applied to them by their persecutors. By this interpretation, the council at Saint-Félix represents the attempts of Cathar bishops to invent a history for themselves after the fact.[164] It hardly needs to be emphasised that there are considerable differences between these two positions, which has predictably provoked dissension.[165]

The later history of the Cathars is a fascinating one, but it does not impinge upon our understanding of the Paulicians. The same is true of those who were supposedly influenced by them, as well as the puzzling *Key of Truth*. Records of later Paulician activity in the Balkans, where a self-identifying community remains until the present day, merit a fuller postscript, however.[166] The heretical presence evidently did not abate in Philippopolis after Alexios' reign, since, in a letter to the archbishop of the city Michael Italikos, Theodore Prodromos assures the archbishop that he will prevail over the many heretics active in the area, although because these are not named a Paulician identification is not certain.[167] This letter may well belong to the reign of Manuel I, which is also the setting that the Patriarch Euthymios of Trnovo's occasionally stylised 14th-century composition the *Life of Hilarion of Moglena* places the titular bishop's initiatives against "Manichees, Armenians, and Bogomils" to the northwest of Thessalonika. The Paulicians are the most likely candidate for these

164 Such is the revisionist portrayal in recent Anglophone literature. On this, see Pegg, "The Paradigm of Catharism," pp. 45–47; Moore, *The War on Heresy*, pp. 289–290. The Francophone literature often has rather different emphases. On this, see the work of Zerner above, as well as Jean-Louis Biget, *Hérésie et inquisition dans le midi de la France* (Paris, 2007); Julien Théry-Astruc, "The Heretical Dissidence of the 'Good Men' in the Albigeois (1276–1329): Localism and Resistance to Roman Clericalism," in *Cathars in Question*, ed. Antonio C. Sennis (York, 2016), pp. 79–111.

165 On this disagreement, see in particular the contributions in the edited collection *Cathars in Question*, ed. Antonio C. Sennis (York, 2016).

166 Note that references to Paulicians and/or Manichaeans are rare in Byzantine sources after the Komnenian era. In fact, Kusabu argues that the equivalence of the two in heresiological texts disappeared altogether. See Hisatsugu Kusabu, "Seminaries, Cults and Militia in Byzantine Heresiologies: A Genealogy of the Labeling of "Paulicians,"" in *Radical Traditionalism: The Influence of Walter Kaegi in Late Antique, Byzantine and Medieval Studies*, eds. Christian Raffensperger, David Olster (Lexington, 2019), p. 183.

167 See Theodore Prodromos, "Epistola prodromi Archiepiscopo Philippopolis Italico," *Grŭtski izvori za bŭlgarskata istoriia* (*Fontes Graeci Historiae Bulgariae*) 7 (1968), p. 138. On this, see also Robert Browning, "Unpublished correspondence between Michael Italicus, archbishop of Philippopolis, and Theodor Prodromos," *Byzantinobulgaria* 1 (1962), pp. 279–297; Fine, "The Size and Significance," p. 398.

"Manichees," although some have dissented from this view.[168] Whatever the truth of this, they were certainly still a presence in the Balkans following the fall of Constantinople to the Fourth Crusade, since Geoffroy de Villehardouin relates the intrigues of the Popelicani of Philippopolis, noting that they offered to cede the city to Kalojan of Bulgaria (1196–1207) in preference to their crusader overlords, although the newly-appointed duke of the city, Renier of Trit, torched their quarter of the city before the plan could be executed.[169]

Thereafter, the Paulicians slip under the radar once more. Only in the late 15th century does the trail pick up, when brother Tůma of the Unity of Brethren, one of the smaller free churches which splintered from Rome in post-Hussite Bohemia, encountered Pavlikans somewhere in the Balkans while searching for like-minded congregations.[170] In some respects, these Pavlikans seem to have held fast to their ancestral beliefs, since they extolled the teachings of Paul the apostle above all others. Other tenets are rather more idiosyncratic, such as their proclivity to baptise members of the community only on their deathbed so that they might die sinless.[171] Later references to Pavlikans, Pavlikians, Paulitians, or Paulines found in this area note their abhorrence of the cross and religious images; traits which are not well attested in the 9th and 10th centuries, but may have developed subsequently as a result of a distaste for the surrounding Orthodox communities. In fact, by all accounts later concentrations of Paulicians zealously segregated themselves from surrounding Christian denominations and this trait only became more marked as outside intervention led the community to become ever more scattered.

A more sustained period of documented contact with the Balkan Paulicians commences at the beginning of the 17th century, when representatives of the Catholic Church started a campaign of conversion that would continue intermittently for centuries. Progress was slow partially due to the sequestered

168 For a translation of the relevant passage, see Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 225–227. Note that Anna Komnene also frequently places Paulicians, Armenians, and Bogomils in close proximity, albeit in Philippopolis rather than Moglena. The Paulician identification of these "Manichees" is upheld by Stoyanov, whereas Fine believes this may be a reference to the variously spelt dualist church of Dragovica/Drugunthia. See Stoyanov, *The Other God*, p. 182; Fine, "The Size and Significance," p. 398.

169 Dancheva-Vasileva, "La Commune des Pauliciens," pp. 48–49; Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *La conquête de Constantinople*, ed. and trans. Edmond Faral, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Paris, 1938–1939), pp. 210–212. For a translation, see Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 259–260.

170 On the Unity of Brethren, see Craig D. Atwood, *The Theology of the Czech Brethren from Hus to Comenius* (University Park, 2009).

171 Milan Loos, *Dualist Heresy in the Middle Ages*, trans. Iris Lewitova (Prague, 1974), p. 336; Fumagalli, *L'eresia dei Pauliciani*, p. 95.

outlook of the communities involved, as well as a tendency to backslide into their ancestral beliefs. As many missionaries soon discovered, securing a hard-won conversion often entailed only a perfunctory change in belief, praxis, or religious alignment. Similarly infuriating was the mobility of the Paulicians, whose ability to disperse when faced with danger or confrontation bears some resemblance to the tactics of their namesakes almost a millennium beforehand.[172] Catholic ministrants nevertheless met with greater success than their rivals, largely on account of the Paulicians' ancestral loathing for the Orthodox priesthood.[173] Oftentimes, however, the Paulicians' nominal adherence was secured by whichever competing authority placed the least fiscal demands upon them. Generally, this allowed the Catholics to win out, but their proscriptions on marriage were far too restrictive for the Paulicians, many of whom had a blasé attitude towards dissolving the marital union. This seems to have been one of several factors which led them to favour ceremonies officiated by a Turkish imam rather than a Christian ministrant. Threats, real or apparent, of conversion to Islam were also not infrequent in contexts where ecclesiastical exactions proved too burdensome.[174] Some researchers, in fact, consider Paulician converts part of the ancestral population of the Pomaks, a Bulgarian-speaking Muslim minority now dispersed among parts of Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey.[175]

The efforts of the Catholic missionaries among the Paulicians have been ably documented elsewhere and it seems superfluous to reproduce them here, save where this relates to contemporary understandings of Paulician beliefs.[176] First and foremost, accusations of dualism are conspicuous by their absence in the Catholic accounts.[177] By contrast, the sources are almost unanimous in

172 Krasimira Moutafova, "The Paulicians – "Different" for All," *Études balkaniques* 4 (1993), pp. 36–37, n. 56.

173 Moutafova, "The Paulicians – "Different" for All," pp. 30; 33; 37.

174 Moutafova, "The Paulicians – "Different" for All," p. 34.

175 Fumagalli, *L'eresia dei Pauliciani*, pp. 101–102. The extent of Paulician conversion to Islam soon after the Ottoman conquest is disputed. Stoyanov, for instance, considers that this was relatively minimal. See, with literature, Yuri Stoyanov, "On Some Parallels between Anatolian and Balkan Heterodox Islamic and Christian Traditions and the Problem of Their Coexistence and Interaction in the Ottoman Period," in *Syncrétismes et hérésies dans l'Orient seljoukide et ottoman* (*XIV^e-XVIII^e siècle*), ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris, 2005), pp. 82–90.

176 In particular, see Moutafova, "The Paulicians – "Different" for All," pp. 29–37; Fumagalli, *L'eresia dei Pauliciani*, pp. 95–101.

177 Stoyanov rightly notes allegations of dualism in a letter of Girolamo Pizzicanella, but it seems clear that Girolamo imputes this belief to the Paulicians himself, rather than deriving the view from first-hand acquaintance with them. Specifically, he considers the Paulicians dualist because, while they are Catholic in name and therefore venerate a good

the Paulicians' esteem for the apostle Paul and his works. This emphasis is pronounced in the writing of brother Tůma and is reiterated by the Catholic missionary Pietro Cedolini in the late 16th century. Besides this, the Paulicians are frequently accused of rejecting the cross and images, of baptising by fire instead of water, and having only a rudimentary priesthood.[178] To a large degree, the differences in sacramental practices seem to be a consequence of their mutual antipathy with surrounding Christian communities, but it is difficult to determine whether their rites were of long standing or not. In any case, the claims of the missionaries are largely corroborated by diplomatic correspondence of the period, particularly where the emphasis on Paul is concerned. At the outset of the chapter we mentioned Mary Wortley Montagu's reference in a letter of 1717 to the Paulines who were so keen to show her the church at Philippopolis reputedly founded by Paul himself.[179] A similar portrayal arises from the writings of Sir Paul Rycaut, who refers to Paulines who used to venerate Paul and baptise by fire in the area, although they had been won to Catholicism by the time he was writing in the 1660s.[180] Echoes of alternative interpretations for their belief, not least those founded on Paul of Samosata, are still found, however. Count Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, writing at a similar time to Montagu, believed that the "Paulitians" he found between Adrianople and Philippopolis derived their faith from the one-time Bishop of Antioch, or so at least he was told by the Orthodox Archbishop of Philippopolis. As for Marsigli's first-hand observations, these are hard to reconcile with contemporary evidence, since he tells us that the group sacrificed sheep and cattle, whereas, contrary to Montagu, he states that they had no church as such, only a rough-cut stone cross standing before a tree and a nearby altar for their sacrifices.[181] The presence of a cross here is especially puzzling since, as we have seen, most observers of the period

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god, they also venerate Samodivi (wood nymphs), whom Girolamo equates with the evil principle. As a result, he considers them dualist, but this interpretation presupposes that they have accepted Catholicism and can therefore hardly be an ancestral belief. For this account, which remains an exemplary cautionary tale of the complexities of allegations of dualism, see Girolamo Pizzicanella, "Notizie della Chiesa in Nicopoli in Bulgaria," in "Nashite Pavlikiani," ed. Liubomir Miletich, *Sbornik za narodni umotvoreniîa, nauka i knizhnina* 19 (1903), p. 347. See also Stoyanov, "On Some Parallels," p. 89, n. 28.

178 Moutafova, "The Paulicians – "Different" for All," pp. 29–30; Fumagalli, *L'eresia dei Pauliciani*, pp. 95–96; Dragojlović, "The History of Paulicianism on the Balkan Peninsula," pp. 243–244.

179 Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Robert Halsband, vol. 1, (Oxford, 1965), p. 319.

180 Paul Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1668), p. 212.

181 Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, *Stato militare dell'Impèrio ottomanno*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (The Hague/Amsterdam, 1732), p. 24.

attest the Paulicians' rejection of the symbol. Vestiges of a Samosatan link are not just confined to Marsigli, since two brothers Paul and John are considered to have imported the Paulician heresy from Kappadokia into Bulgaria by a Bulgarian sermon apocryphally attributed to John Chrysostom, which perhaps dates to the 13th or 14th century.[182] Even factoring in some amount of misunderstanding, it seems that the ancestral narratives and counternarratives surrounding the early Paulicians endured in one form or another, although, as in earlier periods, it needs to be borne in mind that those grouped under the term may not have been an entirely homogeneous breed.

Nowadays, the people most synonymous with Paulician identity are the Banat Bulgarians, who are generally known as Palćene or Pavlikians.[183] As their name suggests, this is a Bulgarian community found mostly in the Banat: an area which corresponds roughly to Vojvodina in Serbia and the Timiş County in Romania. Their presence in the region dates from the end of the 17th century, when the failed Čiprovci Uprising of 1688 against the Ottoman Empire led many Catholic Bulgars to flee to this area after sojourns in Oltenia and Translyvania. Other Catholic Bulgarians fled there via alternate routes. Banat Bulgarians remain in the region today, although some Pavlikians subsequently returned to Bulgaria.[184] It seems undeniable that this population has tangible links to Paulicians of the medieval era, but several factors do not fit with expectations. Whereas Paulicians of our period seem never to have referred to themselves by this name, most Palćene or Pavlikians refer to themselves as such in many contexts, often to distinguish themselves from other Bulgarians.[185] Moreover, there are no traces of Armenian elements in their dialect, while they

182 This is the dating adopted by Saldzhiev. See Hristo Saldzhiev, "The Apocryphal Bulgarian *Sermon of Saint John Chrysostom on the Origin of Paulicians* and Manichaean Dimensions of Medieval Paulician Identity," *Studia Ceranea* 10 (2020), pp. 432–433; Mariyana Tsibranska-Kostova, "Paulicians between the Dogme and the Legend," *Studia Ceranea* 7 (2017), pp. 249–251.

183 Beyond the Balkans, it would perhaps be remiss of me not to mention the surreal account of one Khach'atur Aslanian (Americanised as Bob Lion), a self-identifying Paulician, who, as a nonagenarian cornerstone of the Armenian community in San Diego, told James Russell of his memories, embroidered or otherwise, of a Paulician community in Divriği (the modern Turkish name for Tephrikē), where he resided as a child before the Armenian Genocide. See James R. Russell, "The Last of the Paulicians," *Hask hayagitakan taregirk'* 7–8 (1995–1996), pp. 33–47.

184 Motoki Nomachi, "The Rise, Fall, and Revival of the Banat Bulgarian Literary Language: Sociolinguistic History from the Perspective of Trans-Border Interactions," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Slavic Languages, Identities and Borders*, eds. Tomasz Kamusella, Motoki Nomachi, Catherine Gibson (Basingstoke, 2016), pp. 398–400.

185 Nomachi, "The Rise, Fall, and Revival," pp. 395; 418–419.

also lack any historical recollection of the medieval Paulicians.[186] Clearly, the passage of time and the acculturating potentiality of a Slavo-Ottoman milieu has wrought many changes on the namesakes of our medieval Paulicians. As in the case of early Paulician history in Armenia, there is a fascinating history of faith, language, and conflict to explore, but it lies outside our scope. Whatever their commonalities or differences, the history of the Paylikeank', Paulicians, and Pavlikians is united by their dissidence, their independence, and their parallel experience of life under hegemonies that sought to control their faith.

186 Most literature on the Banat Bulgarian dialect focuses on attempts to revive its use, its status within its host countries, and its place within the broader family of Slavic languages. Minimal interest is generally paid to connections with the medieval Paulicians. The absence of Armenian linguistic links is noted by Neno Nedelchev, "Catholic Bulgarians and Their Dialect," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 179 (2006), p. 148. The sole exponent of Armenian features in the language, so far as I know, is Edouard Selian, "Le dialecte Paulicien," in *The Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Armenian Linguistics, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1995*, ed. Dora Sakayan (Delmar, 1996), pp. 327–334. On knowledge of the medieval Paulicians, see Loos, *Dualist Heresy*, p. 339; Saldzhiev, "The Apocryphal Bulgarian," pp. 430–431. Saldzhiev makes reference to Paulicians calling their ancient Anatolian rulers "kings" in the 17th century, but the source he cites to this effect, a letter by the missionary Philippus Stanislavov describing the claims of contemporary Paulicians to a longstanding connection with Rome, has no discernible connection to Anatolia. See Philippus Stanislavov, "Philippus Stanislavov de Pavlićianorum origine eorumque libris sacris secundum vulgi opinionem quaedam enarrat," in *Acta Bulgariae ecclesiastica ab a. 1565 usque ad a. 1799*, ed. Eusebius Fermendžiu (Zagreb, 1889), p. 42.

CHAPTER 1

Polemics, Punishment, and Forgery: Paulicians in Greek Sources

Controversy is never far away when the foundations of a subject occasion fierce disagreement. Nothing could be truer of the Paulicians and, more specifically, the Greek sources which describe them. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries critics debated the primacy and authenticity of Peter of Sicily's *History of the Paulicians* and Pseudo-Photios' *Brief History of the Manichaeans*, the most detailed sources on the heresy, both of which were ostensibly written at the height of the Paulician threat to the Byzantine Empire, during the first five years of the reign of Basil I (867–886). For some, these sources contain the most reliable extant testimony about the heresy, yet for others they entail intractable problems in terms of content and context. Accordingly, several critics have identified them as forgeries of the mid-10th century, during the reign of Constantine VII (915–959, sole reign: 945–959).[1] The enduring and contentious nature of this debate is understandable given the close textual relationship of these works. They have a similar structure, employ many of the same sources, and argue the same central thesis: that the Paulicians are the continuators of the Manichaean heresy. For Peter of Sicily, this Manichaean identification ensures that the Paulicians merit the death penalty, as mandated by the Justinianic Code and the *Ekloga* of Leo III.[2] The *Brief History* is silent on this crucial matter, but a third source which draws heavily upon it, the *Letter of Theophylaktos Lekapenos* to the Bulgarian Tsar Peter I, adopts a nuanced and

1 See Nina G. Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy* (Paris/The Hague, 1967), pp. 27–79; Karapet Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer im byzantinischen Kaiserreiche und verwandte ketzerische Erscheinungen in Armenien* (Leipzig, 1893), pp. 1–28. Forgery is a difficult concept to define in antiquity since questions of authorship are complex. An intention to deceive is usually a prerequisite of identifying a work as a forgery. See Wolfgang Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum* (Munich, 1971), pp. 5–15.

2 Claudia Ludwig, "The Paulicians and Ninth-Century Byzantine Thought," in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?*, ed. Leslie Brubaker (Aldershot, 1998), p. 33; *Codex Iustinianus*, 1:5:11; 1:5:16, ed. Paul Krüger, *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1895), pp. 53; 55–56. Translation: *The Codex of Justinian: A New Annotated Translation*, trans. Fred H. Blume, ed. Bruce W. Frier, 3 vols, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 200–201; 208–211; *Ecloga: das Gesetzbuch Leons III. und Konstantinos' V.*, 17:52, ed. Ludwig Burgmann (Frankfurt, 1983), pp. 242–243. English translation: *The Laws of the Isaurian Era: The Ecloga and its Appendices*, ed. and trans. Michael T.G Humphreys (Liverpool, 2017), p. 77.

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clement approach which differs markedly from the draconian *History*. Sources which allude to Paulicians in the 9th century, notably the letters of Theodore the Stoudite, the *Chronographia* of Theophanes, and the text which picks up its mantle, *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV, also attest the centrality of capital punishment in debates about the heresy. However our heresiological sources are interpreted, one thing is for certain: they are, quite literally, a matter of life and death.

In this chapter and the one which follows it, I shall argue that these sources testify to an unsuccessful attempt to persuade Constantine's VII court of the desirability of imposing the death penalty on the Paulicians. Any reappraisal of the heresy must get to grips with the intricacies of these sources, but it is essential to note that their authenticity is of minor significance to the historical conclusions of this book, insofar as the portrayal of Paulician belief and community presented herein does not rest not upon these sources *per se*, but rather upon the Paulician material which is preserved within them. This material can be dated securely to the first few decades of the 9th century and by contextualising it within that timeframe we may emancipate Paulician history from source critical debates. Earlier scholarship, by contrast, has not systematically engaged with this Paulician testimony on its own terms, with the result that the authenticity of the Greek sources has traditionally been linked with more fundamental questions about the Paulicians, particularly concerning the supposedly adoptionist or dualist character of their belief. As noted in the introduction, Armenologists and Byzantinists have contested this historiographical battleground from the late 19th century onwards. The former advanced allegations of forgery against the Greek sources and maintained the primacy of the Armenian texts, thereby interpreting the Paulicians as the remnant of an adoptionist Christianity which predated Greek influence in the region, in the process upholding the primacy and purity of ancient Armenian Christianity.[3] This perspective naturally alienated Byzantinists, thereby explaining their spirited defence of the Greek sources.[4] With the frames of debate drawn so rigidly

3 This is particularly true of Conybeare and Garsoïan, but somewhat less so in the case of Ter Mkrttschian, who proposed a Marcionite origin for the heresy. Frederick C. Conybeare, ed., *The Key of Truth. A Manual of the Paulician Church in Armenia* (Oxford, 1898), pp. vi-xiii; Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 151–230; Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer*, pp. 104–112. On romanticised conceptions of Armenian Christianity, see especially Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 186–230; Conybeare (ed.), *The Key of Truth*, *in passim*.

4 Paul Lemerle, "L'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure d'après les sources grecques," *Travaux et mémoires* 5 (1973), pp. 12–15; Paul Speck, "Petros Sikeliotes, seine Historia und der Erzbischof von Bulgarien," *ELLHNIKA* 27 (1974), pp. 385–386, n. 6; Henri Grégoire, "Les

along disciplinary boundaries, it is hardly surprising that earlier exchanges about the authenticity of our sources were so contentious.

My aims in what follows consciously depart from these concerns. Although I shall address the authenticity of these sources, my main objective in doing so is not to draw the value of their testimony into question, but to securely situate them within their proper intellectual context – that of the mid-10th century. This concern is often only implicit here and will reach its full development in the following chapter. For the present, it suffices to note that the *History of the Paulicians* and the *Brief History* are so closely related that their contexts cannot be properly understood in isolation from one another. Despite this, the complex reception of these works makes a definitive reconstruction of their dating simplistic and undesirable. Their relationship with other texts is neither straightforward nor direct and perhaps necessitates proposing the existence of related sources or intermediary witnesses that are now lost. We may be able to sketch the most important contextual factors which animate our texts, but the specific circumstances of their composition are elusive. In particular, the complexity of intellectual activity in the mid-10th century is such that suggesting several complementary explanations seems more appropriate than shoehorning the evidence into a single interpretative framework. The volume of literary production that is commonly assigned to the sole reign of Constantine VII is extraordinary, perhaps too extraordinary.[5] It may be more appropriate to posit greater continuity between Constantine's sole reign and his joint rule with Romanos I Lekapenos, at least in terms of intellectual activity.[6] Works that are conventionally assigned to Constantine's reign may have been written sometime previously, either for himself or for another patron, and then reworked upon Constantine's accession.[7] In short, this period seems

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sources de l'histoire des Pauliciens. Pierre de Sicile est authentique et 'Photius' un faux," *Académie Royale de Belgique, Bulletin Classe des Lettres, 5e série* 22 (1936), pp. 95–96.

5 A number of works have recently been assigned to Constantine VII's reign. See Christian Høgel, "Beauty, Knowledge, and Gain in the Life of Theoktiste," *Byzantion* 88 (2018), pp. 234–235; Denis F. Sullivan, Alice-Mary Talbot, Stamatina McGrath, eds., *The Life of Saint Basil the Younger. Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Moscow Version* (Washington, D.C., 2014), pp. 10–11.

6 Magdalino, for instance, has posited that Constantine's literary pursuits must be seen in continuity with his father Leo VI. Paul Magdalino, "Byzantine Encyclopaedism of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries," in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, eds. Jason König, Greg Woolf (New York, 2013), pp. 224–227. See also Paul Magdalino, "Knowledge in Authority and Authorised History: The Imperial Intellectual Programme of Leo VI and Constantine VII," in *Authority in Byzantium*, ed. Pamela Armstrong (Farnham, 2013), pp. 187–209.

7 A potential example is Constantine of Rhodes' poem *On Constantinople and the Church of the Holy Apostles*, which was dated between 931–944 by Reinach. However, Speck, who

conducive to complicated, evolving textual traditions which cannot always be reduced to a single author and context as modern source criticism has sometimes tacitly assumed.

That being said, in the interests of clarity it is helpful to articulate a starting point. In what follows, I shall maintain that both the *History of the Paulicians* and the *Brief History* as now extant are forgeries of the 10th century, most likely from the sole reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, although the former text is undeniably more complex and possibly had its genesis before Constantine ruled alone. Both sources, along with the *Letter of Theophylaktos Lekapenos*, should be understood within the context of recurrent debates about the punishments to which Paulicians should be subjected at this time. Throughout the 9th century, Byzantine political and religious figures had argued among themselves about the punishments that the Paulicians merited. This was particularly true during periods when the Paulician presence was most acute, or alternatively, when religious tensions were at their greatest. Such was the case during the turbulent years which straddled the reigns of Michael I and Leo V, as well as during the regency of the young Michael III. In all of these cases the Paulicians were persecuted, whereas during the apogee of their power at the beginning of Basil I's reign this does not seem to have been the case. Punishment was evidently the dominant matter which concerned Byzantines in the 9th century, and our texts suggest the same is true of the 10th century. Besides this central point, we can also identify a secondary aim within the *History*, namely that it sought to systematise the available evidence about the Paulicians because they were so poorly documented until their reinvention in the 10th century; a development which will be covered in the following chapter. Even at the time of this reinvention, more attention was paid to the martial exploits of Karbeas and Chrysocheir than to the religious threat of the earlier period, so a text of the *History*'s ilk filled an important lacuna in contemporary thought by weaving these contexts together. Once the *History* and *Brief History* are unmasked as forgeries, the earliest, though

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considers the poem a composite work which was only codified after its author's death, dates its earliest material shortly after 912. See Théodore Reinach, "Commentaire archéologique sur le poème de Constantin le Rhodien," *Revue de études grecques* 9 (1896), pp. 67–68; Paul Speck, "Konstantinos von Rhodos. Zweck und Datum der Ekphrasis der Sieben Wunder von Konstantinopel und der Apostelkirche," *Ποικιλα byzantina* 11 (1991), pp. 258–261. Anthony Kaldellis also argues that Genesios' *Basileion* was written between 915 and 930 and then rewritten during Constantine's sole reign, although not entirely convincingly. See Anthony Kaldellis, ed., *On the Reigns of the Emperors* (Canberra, 1998), pp. ix-xiv. For a refutation, see Apostolos D. Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιτορικοί και χρονογράφοι Τ.2 8ος – 10ος αι*, vol. 2 (Athens, 2002), pp. 317–318.

not necessarily most detailed or interesting, source on the Paulicians is the anonymous *Treatise against the Paulicians*, which predated these sources by a century, since its origins can be traced to the reign of Theophilos (829–842). The overarching interpretation guiding this chapter is substantially similar to that of Garsoïan, although differences of detail and emphasis will be apparent throughout, not least regarding the centrality of punishment to the polemical tradition.[8] As such, the chapter argues against the currently accepted consensus of Lemerle, which is commonly considered to have superseded Garsoïan's work, but entails serious chronological difficulties by confining the textual tradition against the Paulicians to the years 870–872.[9]

In many respects, the arguments advanced in this chapter and the one which follows it have only limited repercussions for our findings on the historical Paulicians. Yet it is still necessary to explore the relationship between these sources; firstly, because although the historical implications are few, their importance is first-rate, particularly regarding the origins of the Islamic alliance; and secondly, because the claim that these sources are mistaken in identifying the Paulicians as dualists is a bold one which needs detailed justification. This claim could be seen as suggesting that the writers who produced these sources acted disingenuously or nefariously, with the implication that they were the hypocritical representatives of a corrupt church. Anti-clerical

8 Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 27–79. See also Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer im byzantinischen Kaiserreiche*, pp. 1–28.

9 Lemerle was aware of these difficulties himself. See Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 39. He argues that *c.*870 Peter of Sicily composed the *History of the Paulicians*, which he then abridged to form the more concise and practical *Treatise*. The *Treatise* was then interpolated into both recensions of the *Chronicon* of George the Monk, while the *History* was metaphrased by Photios, who was then in exile. All of this occurred within the years 870–872. Aside from this compressed timeframe, the chronology entails further difficulties. Firstly, in order to substantiate this interpretation, Lemerle is forced to dispense with the previously accepted dating of the *Chronicon* (which at the time he was writing was 866–867), because according to his reconstruction this necessarily postdates the *Treatise*. However, Afinogenov's recent reappraisal of the *Chronicon* convincingly proposes an earlier date of *c.*846–847 for its first recension. This first recension contains the *Treatise* and this leads Afinogenov to question Lemerle's attribution of the *Treatise* to Peter of Sicily. See Dmitri Afinogenov, "The Date of Georgios Monachos Reconsidered," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 92 (1999), pp. 437–441; Dmitri Afinogenov, "Le manuscrit grec *Coislin.* 305: la version primitive de la *Chronique* de Georges le Moine," *Revue de études byzantines* 62:1 (2004), p. 246. Secondly, Lemerle accounts for Grégoire's *terminus post quem* of 932 (latter emended to 934) for the *Brief History* by arguing that the relevant passage was originally a marginal note that was later incorporated into the text, but the earliest extant manuscript seems too early to posit such an interpolation. In any case, as we shall see, Grégoire's *terminus post quem* is decisive. For Lemerle's arguments, see Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 17–40.

narratives of this kind have customarily been used to explain away unconvincing or inconvenient emphases within the sources, particularly during the centuries that Catholic and Protestant historians debated the origins and beliefs of the Paulicians.[10] But reducing the testimony of our sources to a clerical conspiracy is a caricature – and not a convincing one at that. By describing the contexts of these sources and the relationships between them in this and the following chapter, I hope to do greater justice to the sources' authors by showing that the situation is decidedly more complex. Our 10th-century forgers understood Paulicians as they did as a result of the norms which governed the composition of heresiological writings; their reverence for the written word and the traditions of their predecessors; their participation in a broader intellectual culture conditioned by symbolism and intertextuality; and the necessity of placating the wishes of their patrons, superiors, and audiences. As noted above, they were also participating in the first systematic attempt to make sense of the Paulicians, since a coherent account of their activity did not exist prior to their reinvention in the 10th century.

But above all, like Byzantine officials, bishops, and monastics of the 9th century, our forgers were most interested in debating the matter they had most influence over: the manner in which Paulicians should be punished. Insofar as this issue was fiercely debated among Roman elites, it entailed minimal engagement with the Paulicians themselves. Strange as it may seem, discerning what they did or did not believe was not automatically relevant to how they should be punished. Peter of Sicily may have thought that the Paulicians merited the death penalty if they were Manichaeans, but Theodore the Stoudite, writing over a century beforehand, evidently did not.[11] As a result, Byzantines who were actively engaged with determining the threat that they posed, the legal framework within which they should be situated, and the vexed question of their place within the empire did not have to understand their beliefs. Nonetheless, Roman understandings of Paulician doctrines did evolve and become more nuanced over time. By investigating this evolution, we gain a deeper understanding of the predispositions and strategies through which Romans understood them, thereby allowing us to reach a fuller awareness of

10 This is particularly true of Protestant historiography. See Johann C.L. Gieseler, "Untersuchen über die Geschichte der Paulikianer," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 2:1 (1829), pp. 80–81; Adrien Edmond Febvrel, *Des Pauliciens: Thèse presenté à la Faculté de Theologie protestante de Strasbourg* (Strasbourg, 1868), pp. 1–2; 52–53. Conybeare is especially partisan. See Conybeare, ed., *The Key of Truth*, pp. lxxv-lxxvi; clxviii-cxcvi.

11 Theodore the Stoudite, *Theodori Studitae epistulae*, *Ep*. 455, ed. Georgios Fatouros, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1992), pp. 644–647.

the Byzanto-Paulician interactions which influenced Paulician activity and discourse for much of their history. Thus, the endeavour will considerably enrich our study of the Paulicians as a historical phenomenon going forward.

1 Peter of Sicily's *History of the Paulicians*

The *History of the Paulicians* has been considered the most detailed and reliable source on the Paulicians for much of the time since its initial publication in the 17th century, but it has rarely been far from controversy.[12] Debates over its authenticity have raged intermittently since the 19th century. Adrien Febvrel, Karapet Ter Mkrttschian, and Nina Garsoïan saw glaring inconsistencies with its authorship and context, for the most part betraying incredulity that it could be taken seriously as a 9th-century text, while the likes of Henri Grégoire and Paul Lemerle penned vehement defences of it, rehabilitating it as the most authoritative source written on the Paulicians.[13] I take the former view here, arguing that the *History* was most likely forged during the sole reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (945–959). By this view, Peter of Sicily wrote the *History of the Paulicians* in order to convince Constantine to enact the death penalty against the Paulicians and, in doing so, created the first coherent account of Paulician activity within the empire. To modern sensibilities, it does not do so very convincingly, and the medieval reception of the text suggests that contemporary readers were similarly sceptical. But despite this, the *History* is a truly impressive literary achievement – far more so than prior scholarship has recognized. According to Peter of Sicily's own testimony, he wrote the *History* after Basil I ordered him to travel to Tephrikē and negotiate a prisoner exchange with the Paulicians at the very height of their threat to the empire.[14] The successful outcome of these negotiations would have presented a diplomatic coup given the openly secessionist rhetoric of Chrysocheir, who had not only spent the previous years ransacking the major cities of eastern Asia Minor, but had also demonstrated his intent by demanding that Basil cede

12 The text was first published (in Latin) in Matthaeus Rader, ed., *Petri Siculi Historia Manichaeorum* (Ingolstadt, 1604).

13 Febvrel, *Des Pauliciens*, pp. 3–6; Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer*, pp. 13–28; Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 55–79; Grégoire, "Les sources," pp. 101–109; Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 17–21.

14 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 186–187, ed. Denise Papachryssanthou, trans. Jean Gouillard, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 66–67. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 92.

the empire's eastern provinces to his rule. Throughout this chapter and the one which follows, I shall maintain that the *History* is even more fascinating than this bellicose context.

As it is the most idiosyncratic and contentious of all our anti-Paulician texts, an overview of the *History*'s structure and content is essential here. The text now survives in a single manuscript, the 11th-century *Vaticanus graecus* 511, which lacks extensive marginalia or an apparatus.[15] The lack of contextual information the manuscript provides, coupled with its late date, render it uninformative regarding the authenticity of the text, which is unfortunate because it does not allow us to clarify some of the *History*'s more idiosyncratic features, such as its references to heresy in Bulgaria. A further point of interest is that the *History* is preceded in this manuscript by a fragmentary copy of the *Treatise*, the earliest extant Byzantine text against the Paulicians, which in this case is also attributed to Peter of Sicily.[16] Interestingly, the *History*'s companion text, Pseudo-Photios' *Brief History*, metaphrases the *Treatise* and *History* in succession, thereby indicating that the pseudonymous author could have had access to a manuscript much like this one.[17] If nothing else, the manuscript attests the close relationship of all our anti-Paulician texts.

Another point of significance lies in the title of the *History* in the manuscript, which is certainly not original:[18]

> The same Peter of Sicily's useful history, refutation, and overthrow of the hollow and foolish heresy of the Manichaeans, who are also called Paulicians, disguised as if written to the Archbishop of Bulgaria (*προσωποποιηθεῖσα ὡς πρὸς τὸν ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Βουλγαρίας*).[19]

Despite the length of this title, it is relatively simple in both its vocabulary and syntax, with the notable exception of the last subclause, which is wordy and obscure. For both Lemerle and Jean Gouillard, this convoluted phrase merely

15 See *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 3–6.

16 *Travaux et mémoires* 4, pp. 4–5. The beginning of the *Treatise* is lost in *Vaticanus Graecus* 511, but because the *History* is attributed to "the same Peter of Sicily" the text which preceded it was credited to the same author. On this, see Henri Grégoire, "Sur l'histoire des Pauliciens," *Académie Royale de Belgique, Bulletin Classe des Lettres, 5e série* 22 (1936), pp. 224–226.

17 Henri Grégoire, "Autour des Pauliciens," *Byzantion* 11 (1936), pp. 612–613.

18 The following discussion is indebted to Ter Mkrttschian and Speck. See Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer*, p. 13; Speck, "Petros Sikeliotes," p. 383.

19 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, pp. 6–7. A similar translation is given by Mauro Mormino, ed., *Fozio di Constantinopoli: Contro i Manichei* (Rome, 2019), p. 7.

meant "addressed to the Archbishop of Bulgaria," but a neater solution presents itself.[20] As several critics have noted, the *History*'s concern with heresy in Bulgaria is due to a later and not especially sophisticated revision of the text, since Peter elsewhere notes that his imperial mission to Tephrikē was the stimulus for composing the work.[21] Prior scholarship has not drawn a clear link, but the impetus for this revision was perhaps the spread of heresy in Bulgaria attested by the *Letter of Theophylaktos Lekapenos* to Peter of Bulgaria *c.*945–956, or alternatively the relocation of Paulicians to Philippopolis by John I Tzimiskes in the early 970s. The extant title of the *History* suggests that near contemporaries recognized its reworking to fit a new Bulgarian context and regarded this with some suspicion. For Ter Mkrttschian, this title was evidence that the *History* was forged, but, as Felix Scheidweiler rightly noted, the relevant phrase only indicates that the address to the Archbishop of Bulgaria is questionable.[22]

If the sole surviving manuscript is comparatively unilluminating regarding the authenticity of the *History*, the same is true for the attribution of the text to Peter of Sicily. Peter is elsewhere unknown and there are no references to the diplomatic efforts he claims to have undertaken in any other work. Our knowledge of the *History*'s author is confined to what we learn from the text – and this testimony is often contradictory. Although Peter claims that he is an imperial ambassador, this assertion sits uncomfortably with his command of

20 For Gouillard's translation, which Lemerle adopts, see Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, p. 6; Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 18.

21 Speck, "Petros Sikeliotes," pp. 382–383; Felix Scheidweiler "Paulikianerprobleme," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 43 (1950), pp. 14–15. The early chapters of the *History* give the impression of being written later in Basil's reign than *c.*870–872. Notably, the prisoner exchange is dated to "the beginning of Basil's reign" (*ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς αὐτοκρατορίας Βασιλείου*), thereby suggesting that Basil had ruled for some time when these first paragraphs were written. Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 4, pp. 8–9. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 67.

22 Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer*, pp. 13–14; Scheidweiler, "Paulikianerprobleme," pp. 14–15. While making his argument, Ter Mkrttschian notes the position of Archbishop of Bulgaria was not firmly attested when Peter of Sicily supposedly wrote. Lemerle counters this by referring to a Greek epitaph found in Bulgaria, which in his view suggests that the Byzantine Church was in the process of establishing Greek clergy in Bulgaria at this time. See Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 20–21. As he notes, the *Vita Basilii* states that Basil appointed an archbishop for Bulgaria, but this cannot be securely dated. See Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur liber quo Vita Basilii Imperatoris amplectitur*, 96, ed. and trans. Ihor Ševčenko (Berlin/Boston, 2011), pp. 310–313. However, it should be noted that the title "archbishop" is only given in the title of the *History*, which is not original. In the text itself, Peter addresses only a presiding officer (*προέδρος*), so this debate is not of paramount importance.

heresiological texts and the lengthy theological excursuses which litter his work. This difficulty becomes more pronounced when we reach the *History*'s appended sermons, where Peter nowhere mentions his imperial command. In the isolated occasions when he does refer to himself, he does so in quintessentially monastic terms.[23] In short, he is an enigma. If the conclusions of this chapter are accepted, it is probable that there never was a 9th-century personage called Peter of Sicily. Nevertheless, since the name is unattested elsewhere, we are free to retain it, even if the attribution should more accurately be pseudonymous.

Throughout the *History*, Peter credits the origins of Paulician belief to Mani, as well as Paul and John, the sons of a Manichaean woman called Kallinike, which allows him to articulate his principal argument: that the Paulicians are worthy of capital punishment as in the case of the Manichaeans.[24] The *History* begins with a short introduction which mentions Peter's aforementioned mission to Tephrikē and notes that in the course of this mission he learnt that the Paulicians intend to proselytise in Bulgaria.[25] Although these two compositional contexts are woven together here and are not necessarily mutually exclusive, the lack of reference to Bulgaria elsewhere suggests that the original context of the *History* was Peter's mission to Tephrikē, which he invokes once more at the culmination of the text.[26] Perhaps tellingly, the address to the head of the Bulgarian Church only comes after this introductory section, without any of the salutations or pleasantries that would be expected. Instead, there is only an abstract discussion of the dangers of heresy.[27] This is followed by a polemical section in which Peter characterises heresy as arising from the machinations of the devil, noting ways in which the evil one's scheming has been confounded by the agency of the Trinity, the Virgin, and the cross, among others.[28] Peter then identifies the heresy with which he is concerned as

23 Peter of Sicily, *Sermons against the Paulicians*, *Patrologia Graeca* 104, col. 1305–1306: "I am a sinner and unworthy." A similar reference also occurs in the early chapters of the *History*, where Peter calls himself "worthless and free of all virtue." Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 6, pp. 8–9. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 67.

24 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 46–67, pp. 22–31. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 74.

25 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 1–6, pp. 6–9. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 66–67.

26 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 187, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 92. See also Speck, "Petros Sikeliotes," pp. 382–383.

27 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 7–17, pp. 10–13. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 67–68.

28 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 18–34, pp. 12–19. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 68–71.

Manichaean, which he understands to be one and the same as Paulician.[29] This section is followed by Peter's six points, in which he describes the Paulicians' six main departures from orthodox belief.[30]

For Peter to argue that the Paulicians are none other than Manichaeans, it is necessary for him to demonstrate filiation between the two. He does so through an account linking Mani, Paul and John, the sons of Kallinike, and the Paulician *didaskaloi*. This account is broadly historical in nature, although this description is somewhat misleading, firstly because the narrative is far from chronologically precise and secondly due to the prevailing ambiguity in our sources about whether Paul, son of Kallinike, should be understood as a polemicised caricature of Paul of Samosata or not.[31] This second point, which also clouds the interpretation of the *Treatise*, the *History*'s ultimate source for these allusions, merits a short excursus here. In the *History*'s account, Paul and John derive their belief from their mother Kallinike, who in turn received this from Mani's disciples. Notably, the narrative places these figures in "Samosata of Armenia," that is Arsamosata (Shimshāṭ), rather than Samosata in Syria, the birthplace of the adoptionist bishop.[32] Moreover, since Mani (*c.*216–274) and Paul of Samosata (Bishop of Antioch 260/61-272) were contemporaries, the chronology does not fit with the latter deriving his belief a generation removed from Mani's disciples.[33] This point would appear to be corroborated by the observation that the *History*, like the *Treatise*, places Paul's activity in Phanaroia in Paphlagonia, rather than Antioch.[34] Thus, it would seem that Kallinike's son could not be the same figure as the Bishop of Antioch. However, in a later passage the *History* calls him: "Paul of Samosata, the son of Kallinike the Manichaean," thereby seeming to elide the two figures.[35] Further

29 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 33, pp. 18–19. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 71. For the equivalence of Manichaeans and Paulicians, see Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 170, pp. 62–63. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 89.

30 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 36–45, pp. 18–23. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 72–74.

31 Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 213–216.

32 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 84, pp. 36–37. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 75. On this and the below, see also Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 49–51.

33 For the dates attributed to Mani, see Kevin J. Coyle, "Mani, Manichaeism," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, 1999), pp. 520–521.

34 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 84–86, pp. 36–39. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 75; *Treatise*, 2, ed. and trans. Charles Astruc, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), p. 80. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 93.

35 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 93, pp. 40–41. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 76.

complicating matters, the *Treatise* places Paul and his family in Samosata, rather than "Samosata of Armenia" as the *History* does.[36] There is clearly a great deal of confusion here, much of which presumably stems from Peter of Sicily's reading of the *Treatise*, but it also seems that the contested nature of the term Paulician and, more specifically, the uncertain identity of the Paul with which the name should be associated have left some cryptic traces in the textual tradition. The ambiguities cannot be resolved here, but it should be borne in mind that the geography, chronology, and prosopography of our texts must be taken with a pinch of salt.

Returning to the overview of the *History*'s narrative, after Peter of Sicily's description of the Paulicians' six main errors, he proceeds to an account of Mani and his alleged forerunners derived principally from Cyril of Jerusalem's *Catechetical Sermons*.[37] Peter then traces the teaching of Mani's disciples to Samosata of Armenia and the trifecta of Kallinike, Paul, and John mentioned above.[38] After this, the *History* offers an account of the Paulicians proper and in particular, the *didaskaloi* Constantine-Silvanos, Symeon-Titos, Gegnesios-Timothy, and Joseph-Epaphroditos.[39] This material is taken from the Paulician source which Ludwig termed the *Didaskalie*, although the same is probably not

36 *Treatise*, 1–2, p. 80. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 93. Pseudo-Photios adopts both readings, depending on which text he is paraphrasing. See Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 2; 55–56, ed. Wanda Conus-Wolska, trans. Joseph Paramelle, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 120–121; 138–139.

37 The precursors of Mani in the heresiological tradition have no discernible basis in fact. Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 46–67, pp. 22–31. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 74; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses*, in *Cyrilli Hierosolymorum archiepiscopi opera*, 6:22–31, eds. Wilhelm C. Reischl, Joseph Rupp (Hildesheim, 1967), pp. 184–201. English translation: *Procatechesis. Catecheses 1–12*, ed. and trans. Leo P. McCauley, Anthony A. Stephenson (Washington, D.C., 1969), pp. 161–167. The ultimate source of Cyril's narrative is the *Acta Archelai*. For this, see Hegemonios, *Acta Archelai*, ed. Charles H. Beeson (Leipzig, 1906). English translation: *Acta Archelai: The Acts of Archelaus*, ed. Samuel N.C. Lieu, Kevin Kaatz, trans. Mark Vermes (Turnhout, 2001). In chapter 78 of the *History*, Peter of Sicily also cites Socrates of Constantinople's *Ecclesiastical History* as a source for his account of the Manichaeans, whereas in chapter 82 he notes a debt to an unnamed work of Epiphanios of Salamis that can be identified as the *De mensuris et ponderibus*. For these, see Socrates of Constantinople, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Günther C. Hansen, Manja Širinjan (Berlin, 1995). English translation: *Socrates, Sozomenus: Church Histories*, ed. and trans. Andrew C. Zenos (Grand Rapids, 1957), pp. 1–178; Epiphanios of Salamis, *De mensuris et ponderibus*, *Patrologia Graeca* 43, col. 236–294.

38 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 84–87, pp. 36–39. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 75.

39 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 94–129, pp. 40–51. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 76–83.

true of the career of Sergios-Tychikos, which stemmed from other sources.[40] The *History* then ends with some brief remarks on the later Paulician leaders Karbeas and Chrysocheir.[41] It was originally followed by six sermons against the Paulicians, which were devoted to the six main departures from orthodoxy described above. Only the first two of these sermons and the beginning of the third now survive.[42] As noted above, within these sermons Peter describes himself with monastic characteristics that are not in keeping with his status as an imperial ambassador. This is one of a number of inconsistencies which suggest that the *History* is not as it seems.

The earliest criticisms of the text's authenticity centred upon the religio-political context within which Peter of Sicily situated his work. Modern scholars have traditionally dated the *History* between 870 and 872, because Peter dates his imperial mission to "the second year of the rule of Basil, Constantine, and Leo, our pious, just, and great emperors."[43] Basil and his eldest son Constantine were crowned in 867, but his younger son Leo, if biological son he was, only assumed this honour in 870, so this reference is ambiguous and could be interpreted as referring to either 870 or 872.[44] If the *History* is analysed at face value, the text cannot logically postdate 872, since Chrysocheir died in this year, whereas the *History* treats him as though he were still alive. Aside from the imprecise reference to Basil and his sons, the principal issue with these dates is that it is unlikely that Peter could have successfully negotiated a prisoner exchange at this time. Genesios, for instance, notes that Basil rejected Chrysocheir's terms out of hand when the latter demanded the provinces of the east, whereas the *Vita Basilii* has Basil swear vengeance on Chrysocheir's head.[45] The animosity between the two was at a peak during these years,

40 Claudia Ludwig, "Wer hat was in welcher Absicht wie beschreiben? Bemerkungen zur Historia des Petros Sikeliotes über die Paulikianer," *Varia 2 Ποικιλα byzantina* 6 (1987), pp. 149–227. On Sergios, see Appendix 2.

41 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 184–187, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 91–92.

42 Peter of Sicily, *Sermons against the Paulicians*, col. 1305–1352.

43 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 187, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 92.

44 See Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 19. Some sources consider both Constantine and Leo to be sons of Michael III, who married Basil to his mistress Eudokia Ingerine, although, as Tougher rightly points out, scholarship has focused largely on Leo's parentage. On this, see Shaun Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886–912): Politics and People* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 42; 67 with literature; George the Monk Continuatus, 33, *Theophanes continuatus, Ioannes Caminiata, Symeon Magister, Georgius monachus*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, 1838), p. 835.

45 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:35, eds. Anni Lesmüller-Werner, Hans P. Thurn, (Berlin/New York, 1978), p. 86, l. 80–83. English translation: *Genesios. On the*

rendering it unlikely that Peter's negotiations would have ended as favourably as is claimed.

This difficulty is heightened by ambiguities surrounding the conjectural prisoner exchange and, even more so, the curious choice of Peter as the ambassador. During our period, prisoner exchanges between the empire and the 'Abbāsid Caliphate took place on neutral ground between the two, principally upon the Lamos river in Kilikia.[46] A similar exchange could presumably not occur at the main Paulician centre of Tephrikē, since doing so would serve to acknowledge their authority in this area. The context therefore suggests that Peter's mission was confined to preliminary negotiations with a view to a later exchange elsewhere and, although his phrasing seems to agree with this, he offers us no specifics on the exchange itself. The lack of testimony regarding Paulician prisoner exchanges makes matters such as these difficult to assess, but it is important to note that exchanges of some kind certainly did take place. References to Paulicians holding Byzantines prisoner are relatively commonplace.[47] While recounting the death of Chrysocheir, Genesios notes that his slayer Poullades was formerly one of his prisoners. Since Chrysocheir appeals to his good treatment of Poullades, it seems that he always intended to release him at some point.[48] For our purposes, the problem is not the exchange as such, but rather the identity of the ambassador. As noted throughout, Peter of Sicily consistently advocates the death penalty for the Paulicians, but the logical corollary of this would be the execution of Byzantine prisoners within Paulician custody – that is, exactly the same people that Peter sought to release! Peter's fanaticism renders him uniquely unsuitable for the mission on which Basil I supposedly sent him. The draconian views that he espouses could only

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Reigns of the Emperors, ed. Anthony Kaldellis (Canberra, 1998), p. 107; Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 41; 43, pp. 148–149; 156–159.

46 Hugh N. Kennedy, "Byzantine-Arab Diplomacy in the Near East from the Islamic Conquests to the Mid-Eleventh Century," in *Byzantine Diplomacy* (*Papers from the 24th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990*), eds. Jonathan Shepard, Simon Franklin (London, 1992), pp. 137–139.

47 *Treatise*, 23, p. 92. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 96; Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur Libri I-IV*, 4:23, eds. and trans. J. Michael Featherstone, Juan Signes Codoñer (Boston/Berlin, 2015), pp. 251–252; Michael, Monk and Synkellos, "De XLII martyribus Amoriensibus narrationes et carmina sacra," in *Zapiski Imperatorskoĭ akademīi nauk po Istoriko-filologicheskomu otdĭelenīīu. Mémoires de l'Académie impériale des sciences de St.-Pétersbourg. Classe historico-philologique. VIIIe série* 7:2, eds. Vasily G. Vasil'evsky, Petr V. Nikitin (1905), p. 29.

48 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:37, p. 88. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 109–110.

be made after the waning of the Paulician threat, but Peter explicitly notes that he wrote while their most dangerous leader Chrysocheir still lived.

Sure enough, the most troubling aspect of the *History*'s context is its inattentive characterisation of Chrysocheir and the period within which the text was supposedly written. Even though Peter claims to have written at the apogee of Paulician influence, he barely mentions Chrysocheir, or his predecessor Karbeas, in the *History*. What little he does mention contradicts the testimony of our other sources. In *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV, for instance, Theodora's persecution of the Paulicians and the subsequent flight of Karbeas is lamented as the trigger for the militarised Paulician resistance that would bring untold sufferings upon the empire in subsequent decades, mainly as a result of their ensuing alliance with the Emirate of Melitene.[49] Yet in the *History*, Karbeas' flight is never recounted and the alliance with Melitene is credited to Sergios' followers the *Kynochoritae* and *Astatoi*, who allegedly fled the empire in the aftermath of the persecutions of Michael I and Leo V.[50] Suspiciously, Karbeas merely appears at the head of the Paulicians sometime after the death of Sergios.[51] As for Chrysocheir, despite the fact that he was the empire's most inveterate enemy at the time when Peter supposedly wrote, he is only mentioned once in passing within the *History*. Even here, Peter portrays him in curiously indifferent terms and he certainly does not deign to vilify him for the outrages he inflicted upon Nikaea, Nikomedia, or Ephesos.[52] Peter's focus instead remains on the long-dead *didaskaloi*, the last of which, Sergios-Tychikos, he excoriates in terms that we might expect to be reserved for Chrysocheir.[53] It is scarcely credible that a contemporary writer could consider these obscure heresiarchs and a potential threat from Paulician missionaries, which may or may not have been confined to Bulgaria in the original version of the text, more

49 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, pp. 236–237.

50 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 175–178, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 90. *Kynochoritae* seems to be a polemicised term for the inhabitants of Kainochorion, whereas Lemerle's contention that the *Astatoi* derive from the Greek verb *ἀστατεῖν* and are therefore called "wanderers" should be preferred to Ludwig's conjecture that the name stems from the Latin *hastati*. On these points, see Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 72; Henri Grégoire, "Pour l'histoire des églises pauliciennes καινοχώριον du Pont, Episparis en φανάροια," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 13 (1947), pp. 512–513; Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 212–213.

51 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 184, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 91.

52 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 186–187, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 92.

53 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 154–156, pp. 56–59. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 86–87.

threatening than a secessionist threat that ransacked the empire's eastern themata and aligned itself with neighbouring Islamic emirates. All indications suggest that Peter wrote in a totally different context to the troubled beginning of Basil's reign.

If the *History*'s avowed context is unconvincing, we need not look far to uncover alternative reasons for its composition. As Ter Mkrttschian noted long ago, the continual eulogisation of the imperial power within the *History* suggests that it could only be intended for an emperor, probably one who was preoccupied with heterodoxy. For him, this could only be Alexios I, whose initiatives against both the Paulicians and Bogomils are well known.[54] This interpretation can no longer be substantiated, but a more obvious candidate springs to mind: Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos.[55] Constantine bore such a fascination with his grandfather Basil I that he credits himself with the composition of Basil's *vita*.[56] The panegyrical reverence shown to Basil in the *History* thereby suggests Constantine could have been its intended audience.[57] As Garsoïan has shown, the *History* fits neatly into the intellectual context of the mid-10th century.[58] Its compilation and reuse of other sources is typical of the period, as evidenced by works such as the *De administrando imperio* and *De ceremoniis*, both of which were also written under the direction of Constantine.[59] Finally, the relationship of the *History* to its companion text, Pseudo-Photios' *Brief History*, is also typical of literary practice in this era. They employ essentially the same source material, as is true in the case of the two primary historical works composed during Constantine's reign: the

54 Anna Komnene, *Annae Comnenae Alexias*, 14:8–9, eds. Diether R. Reinsch, Athanasios Kambylis (Berlin/New York, 2001), pp. 454–460. English translation: *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth A.S. Dawes (London, 1928), pp. 383–389; Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, 15:8–9, pp. 485–491. Translation: *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, pp. 412–418.

55 Bury noted that the *History* could not be a Komnenian forgery, since the single extant manuscript predates this period. See John Bagnell Bury, ed., "Appendix 6. The Paulician Heresy," in Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 6 (London. 1898), p. 541.

56 In fact, the *vita* was probably composed by a ghost writer. See Ševčenko, ed., Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, p. 13*.

57 See Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 89–92; 187, pp. 38–41; 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 75–76; 92.

58 Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 73–79.

59 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De administrando imperio*, ed. Gyula Moravcsik, trans. Romilly J.H. Jenkins, 2 vols (Washington, D.C., 1967); Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *The Book of Ceremonies. Constantine Porphyrogennetos*, ed. and trans. Anne Moffatt, Maxeme Tall, 2 vols (Canberra, 2012).

Basileion of Genesios and *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV.[60] It is commonly assumed that *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV was written in order to rectify the stylistic deficiencies of the *Basileion* and we can imagine that a similar rationale applies to the *History* and *Brief History of the Manichaeans*.[61] As we shall see, the latter text resolves many of the ambiguities and inadequacies of the former. Besides this, the *Letter of Theophylaktos Lekapenos* shows that the punishment of heretics very similar to Paulicians was a point of concern during Constantine's reign, so the central aim of the *History* fits neatly within this context too. Finally, an anti-Miaphysite tract by Demetrios of Kyzikos alludes to Constantine's participation in theological debates with the Paulicians and Athinganoi, thereby establishing a direct link between the emperor and heresy at this time.[62]

The most decisive argument which places the *History* in the 10th century, and, more specifically, the sole reign of Constantine VII, is its account of the Paulician flight to Melitene after the persecutions of Michael I and Leo V, which in my view shows a conscious distortion of the account of *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV. Since the latter text is conventionally dated to Constantine's sole reign, it follows that the *History* must also do so, since it must predate the *Letter of Theophylaktos Lekapenos*, which dates to 956 at the latest. These observations give us the *termini* of 945–956, although it would perhaps be judicious to employ some flexibility here. There are good grounds to propose that the *History*, which betrays signs of revision and interpolation, had a complex genesis. Moreover, since both Genesios' *Basileion* and *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV were based upon a common source, it is possible that Peter of Sicily consulted this common source instead of the latter text.[63] This seems

60 See Athanasios Markopoulos, "Genesios: A Study," in *Byzantinisches Archiv: Realia Byzantina*, eds. Giannis Mavromatis, Sofia Kotzabassi (Berlin, 2009), p. 147; Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy,* p. 77.

61 Franjo Barišić, "Génésios et le Continuateur de Théophane," *Byzantion* 28 (1958), pp. 120–122; Markopoulos, "Genesios: A Study," p. 144; Lesmüller-Werner and Thurn, eds., Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, p. xii.

62 Demetrios of Kyzikos, *De Jacobitarum hæresi et Chatzitzariorum*. Preface in *Erlasse des Patriarchen von Konstantinopel Alexios Studites*, ed. Gerhard Ficker (Kiel, 1911), pp. 22–23. For the main body of Demetrios' tract, see *Patrologia Graeca* 127, col. 879–884.

63 The form that this common source took is disputed. For contrasting opinions, see Jakov N. Ljubarskij, "Theophanes Continuatus und Genesios: das Problem einer gemeinsamen Quelle," *Byzantinoslavica* 48 (1987), pp. 12–27; Juan Signes Codoñer, "Constantino Porfirogéneto y la fuente común de Genesio y Theophanes Continuatus I-IV," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 86/87 (1993/94), pp. 324–331; 333–334; Markopoulos, "Genesios: A Study," pp. 145–147; Warren T. Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 134–152.

unlikely, both because Peter seems to deliberately conceal his dependence on the Continuator, and because Genesios does not discuss the relevant episode, thereby implying that it may not have been present in the common source. Despite these objections to a more precise dating, it is at least apparent that the forging of the *History* occurred at some point during the mid-10th century, as shown by the philological evidence within it and the *Brief History*, which can be more certainly dated after 934.

2 The *History* and the Persecutions of Theodora

The most convincing reason to place the *History of the Paulicians* in the mid-10th century is that its account of the persecutions of Michael I and Leo V is based on the Continuator's account of Theodora's persecutions. Ironically, the passage relates to the same events which demonstrate that Pseudo-Photios' *Brief History* is a forgery. The principal actions underpinning the accounts of the *History* and *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV are the same. In both cases the relevant persecutions cause the Paulicians to flee the empire and settle in Argaous, having come to an agreement with the Emir of Melitene. There are textual similarities between the two accounts, but these are not proximate enough to indicate direct influence.[64] Instead, the crucial details are that the chronology and actors referred to in each case are different. The majority of individuals in the *History*, such as Parakondakes and Thomas the Metropolitan, are unattested elsewhere. As such, their historicity is a matter of dispute. The relevant extracts are as follows:

Theophanes Continuatus I-IV:

> When he [Karbeas] heard that his own father had been hung on the furca he considered this the most terrible of things and, taking thought for his own life, he fled as a refugee together with another five thousand adherents of this heresy to Amer who then occupied Melitene, and from there they went to the caliph and were received with great honour. And

64 Most notably, the *τότε* which proves crucial to the interpretation of the *Brief History* is paralleled in references to ʿAmr b. ʿUbaydallāh b. Marwān al-Aqṭaʿ al-Sulamī (Emir of Melitene *c.*830s-863) in both of these accounts. Intriguingly, similar uses are found applied to ʿAmr at Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 3:31, pp. 182–183, l. 7–8; Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 3:13, p. 47, l. 25. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. 63.

> having given and likewise received guarantees, they soon set out against the land of the Romans; and on account of their victories, when their numbers had increased, they endeavoured to found cities for themselves, one called Argaoun, and also Amara.[65]

History of the Paulicians:

> But later some of the students of Sergios, the so-called *Astatoi*, slaughtered the *exarch* [Parakondakes] by means of cunning and trickery and the *Kynochoritae* likewise slew Thomas the Metropolitan. Thus, the *Astatoi* fled to Melitene. The emir Monocherares then ruled the Saracens living there. Taking Argaous from him, the *Astatoi* settled there, and having assembled from all parts they began to plunder Romania.[66]

Despite their similarities, the contexts of the two accounts are entirely different. In the *History*, these events take place during Sergios-Tychikos' (*c*.800/01-834/35) leadership, soon after the persecutions of Michael I and Leo V, whereas in *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV Karbeas (*c*.844–863) heads the Paulicians. In order to reconcile this testimony, some historians, most notably Milan Loos, Garsoïan, and Lemerle, have posited two analogous flights to Melitene several decades apart, but it actually seems that Peter of Sicily has distorted the Continuator's testimony for his own ends.[67]

The reason that Peter would do so is obvious: associating the Islamic alliance with the followers of Sergios emphasises the threat of the *didaskaloi* and their doctrines, as he has done throughout the *History*, in order to advocate the applicability of the death penalty. In so doing, he reconciled the two sets of sources he had at his disposal, the Paulician sources (namely the *Didaskalie* and *Letters of Sergios*) and the later Greek histories. Critically, Peter's modifications are evident from his characterisation of Karbeas. As indicated above, Karbeas' flight is never mentioned by the *History*. He merely appears, with no discernible link to his predecessors. While the Continuator credits him with settling Argaous and Tephrikē, in the *History* he is already present at the

65 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:16, pp. 236–237, l. 14–19.

66 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 177–178, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 90.

67 Loos, "Le mouvement," pp. 277–283; Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 120–128; Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 72–74; 82–90. In a similar vein, see recently Mauro Mormino, ed., *Fozio di Constantinopoli: Contro i Manichei* (Rome, 2019), pp. 36–38; 42–45.

former and founds only the latter. Despite the centrality of the Muslim alliance to his success, which is consistently attested by both Greek and Arabic sources, he is portrayed as trying to throw off their oversight in the *History*.[68] Most tellingly of all, Theodora's persecutions, which are crucial to his rise to prominence in the view of the Continuator, are never recounted by Peter of Sicily. This omission suggests that Peter has attempted to conceal his dependence on the Continuator by excising the key features of the latter's account from his narrative. This interpretation is corroborated by three observations; firstly, Peter lacked sources for Sergios' career, which implies that he was using *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV to fill this gap;[69] secondly, a fuller analysis of the *History* shows that Peter invents and distorts the events, actors, and chronology of other sources, thereby giving precedents for his use of *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV here;[70] and thirdly, the *History*'s claim that Paulician-Islamic raiding was widespread in the 810s is unsupported by other sources.

This latter issue merits attention because it has widespread repercussions for our understanding of Paulician history. The first matter to address is the prominence of the Emirate of Melitene, which was not sufficiently powerful to oppose the empire at the time which the *History* implies. Although the *History* intimates that Islamic raiding was common during the period that it places the flight to Melitene (in the latter part of the 810s), raids all but ceased during the civil war between the brothers al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn and its aftermath (*c.*809–830).[71] The most notable offensive through this area was that of the Byzantine pretender Thomas the Slav (*c.*819–823), which can hardly be characterised as a traditional razzia, even if Thomas did benefit from Islamic support.[72] As for Melitene, it only became a regional power after the accession of al-Mu'taṣim in 833. Bernd Vest, who has written an exhaustive study of the city, connects its rise to prominence with 'Amr b. 'Ubaydallāh b. Marwān al-Aqṭa' al-Sulamī, an energetic commander who raided Byzantine lands frequently during the reign of Michael III. It is uncertain when 'Amr became Emir of Melitene, but it is generally assumed that he acquired this role during the 830s.

68 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 184–185, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 90–91.

69 See Appendix 2.

70 On this, see his invention of a chronology for the *Didaskalie* in Appendix 1.

71 John F. Haldon, Hugh N. Kennedy, "The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Military Organisation and Society in the Borderlands," *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 19 (1980), pp. 113–114.

72 Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos*, pp. 45–52.

The first undisputed reference to him occurs in the course of al-Muʿtaṣim's Amorion campaign of 838.[73] It is difficult to place the emirate's rise before the 830s, especially because al-ʿAbbās b. Maʾmūn, the son of the caliph al-Maʾmūn (813–833), held jurisdiction over the frontier provinces before his downfall, which occurred *c*.835–838.[74] Moreover, the emirate's newfound importance was connected with al-Muʿtaṣim's destruction of the strategic base of Tyana (Ṭuwāna) to the north of the Taurus Mountains in 833, since after this time Islamic invasion routes increasingly began to pass through Melitene, although the southern pass through the Kilikian Gates was still a common route.[75] Another crucial factor is that, from al-Muʿtaṣim's reign onward, the emirs of the *thughūr* (frontiers) no longer had their commands rotated or withdrawn as frequently, with the result that lifelong careers in the area became more common.[76] The activity of ʿAmr al-Aqṭaʿ in particular seems emblematic of this context. The above observations suggest that the emirate's capacity to raid Byzantine territory was a consequence of the politico-military context of the 830s and, more particularly, the ascendancy of al-Muʿtaṣim. This is supported by other observations. Paulician raids against the empire are otherwise unattested at a date as early as the 810s. The first securely dated attacks arise during the 840s and 850s. Theophilos campaigned vigorously on the eastern frontier during his reign, reaching as far as Theodosiopolis, Arsamosata, and Melitene during expeditions in 835 and 837. It is inconceivable that he would have left a Paulician insurgency to threaten his supply lines, if one existed. Yet there are no references to Paulician resistance during his reign, which leads to the inevitable conclusions that there was no such resistance and that the *History*'s account is seriously distorted.

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73 Bernd A. Vest, *Geschichte der Stadt Melitene und der umliegenden Gebiete: vom Vorabend der arabischen bis zum Abschluß der türkischen Eroberung* (*um 600–1124*), 3 vols, vol. 3 (Hamburg, 2007), p. 1788. Vest's dates for ʿAmr's leadership (pre. 834/5–863) are flawed because he did not notice that Michael the Syrian's account of ʿAmr's purported victory over Theophilos in 835 is a mistaken duplicate of the 838 battle of Anzes. As Signes Codoñer notes, Theophilos was campaigning in Theodosiopolis far to the north in this year, so ʿAmr's alleged victory is impossible. See Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos*, pp. 259–262; Michael the Syrian, *The Syriac Chronicle of Michael Rabo* (*the Great*)*: A Universal History from the Creation*, 12:18, ed. and trans. Matti Moosa (Teaneck, 2014), p. 564. For contrary perspectives, see Warren T. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival 780–842* (Stanford, 1988), p. 286; Vest, *Melitene*, vol. 2, pp. 633–634.

74 Al-ʿAbbās was the governor of *al-Thughūr*, *al-ʿAwāṣim*, and *al-Jazīra*. See Vest, *Melitene*, vol. 2 pp. 663–664.

75 Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos*, p. 243.

76 Peter von Sivers, "Taxes and Trade in the ʿAbbāsid Thughūr, 750–962/133–351," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 25:1 (1982), pp. 86–88.

The second point of significance is the identity of the Emir of Melitene in the accounts mentioned above. In *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV, he is called Amer, as is also the case in the *Basileion* of Genesios and the *Chronicon* of Symeon the Logothete.[77] This Amer corresponds to the same ʻAmr b. ʻUbaydallāh b. Marwān al-Aqṭaʻ al-Sulamī mentioned above. By contrast, in the *History* and its companion text, the *Brief History*, the emir is named Monocherares (literally, 'the one-handed').[78] Monocherares is a faithful translation of ʻAmr's Arabic surname al-Aqṭaʻ, although since it is a family name there is no indication that ʻAmr himself was one handed.[79] Hence, it is possible that Monocherares either refers to ʻAmr or, alternatively, a member of his family. Most historians have avoided identifying the Monocherares of the *History*, probably because their interest in this figure was only incidental.[80] Both Garsoïan and Juan Signes Codoñer have assumed that Monocherares should be identified as ʻAmr in places, although they do not seem to have been aware of the chronological difficulties that this might entail, given that ʻAmr is not identified as the Emir of Melitene until the 830s. Only Lemerle noticed this issue and although he too identified Monocherares with ʻAmr, the observations he makes point towards an alternative reconstruction.[81]

As noted above, ʻAmr is not attested before 838, but, in order to reconcile his rule with the early Paulician flight described by the *History*, Lemerle proposed that he had already ruled Melitene for some time before the death of Sergios in 834/35. The Continuator tells us that ʻAmr died fighting on the front lines

77 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati,* 3:31, pp. 182–183, l. 7–8; Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 3:13, p. 47, l. 25. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. 63; Symeon the Logothete, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae chronicon*, 131:4, ed. Staffan Wahlgren (Berlin/New York, 2006), p. 233.

78 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 178, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 90; Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 137, pp. 166–169.

79 Vest, *Melitene*, vol. 2, p. 661.

80 Nina G. Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy. A Reinterpretation," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 25 (1971), p. 91; Signes Codoñer, *The Emperor Theophilos*, pp. 49–50. The two Greek names are also conflated at Ralph-Johannes Lilie et al., *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit. Erste Abteilung* (*641–867*), 6 vols, vol. 5 (Berlin/New York, 2001), #8552, pp. 76–77. Most commentators have avoided identifying the emir in question. See Loos, "Le mouvement," pp. 277–278; 282; Leslie W. Barnard, "The Paulicians and Iconoclasm," in *Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, eds. Anthony Bryer, Judith Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), pp. 80–81; Claudia Ludwig, "The Paulicians and Ninth-Century Byzantine Thought," in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?*, ed. Leslie Brubaker (Aldershot, 1998), p. 25. For ʻAmr's name, see also Marius Canard, "Les principaux personnages du roman chevalerie arabe Ḏāt al-Himma wa-l-baṭṭāl," *Arabica* 8:2 (1961), p. 170.

81 Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 73, n. 64.

during the 863 battle of Lalakaon/Poson, thereby demonstrating that his rule in Melitene lasted at least a quarter of a century.[82] A passage of al-Balādhurī's *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān* (*Book of the Conquest of Lands*) is crucial here. It states that, between 809 and 813, a certain 'Ubaydallāh b. al-Aqṭa' ransomed his son from the Romans in return for the fortress of Kamkh, to the northeast of Melitene on the upper reaches of the Euphrates.[83] It seems certain that this 'Ubaydallāh is the father of our 'Amr al-Aqṭa', but we cannot assume that the unnamed son is 'Amr, who was still militarily active half a century later. At the very least, the passage suggests that the rule of Melitene was hereditary, and that the designation al-Aqṭa' did not belong to 'Amr alone. These points surely provide the solution to the conundrum of identifying Monocherares. Much credit is due to Claude Cahen, whose tentative suggestion Lemerle mentions: the surname al-Aqṭa' originally belonged to 'Amr's grandfather, Marwān, and this is the Monocherares to whom Peter of Sicily alludes.[84] This suggestion is not chronologically sound, since it is clear that 'Ubaydallāh had already succeeded Marwān by the time that the *History* states the first Paulicians fled to Melitene. Nevertheless, it seems clear that Peter is attempting to allude to one of 'Amr's predecessors – and I think it unlikely he has a specific person in mind – when he refers to this "Monocherares." The reasons that he has done so are obvious: it rectifies the chronology of his account in keeping with the early date he proposes for the Paulician flight to Melitene, as well as concealing his dependence on *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV.

According to the above argument, then, Peter of Sicily distorted the account of the Continuator in the *History of the Paulicians* in order to associate the doctrinal threat posed by the Paulician *didaskaloi* with later Paulician militarism, in the process largely eliding the agency of its prime architects Karbeas and Chrysocheir. In my view, Peter's account demonstrates a deliberate attempt to conceal his alterations, which in turn suggests that he worked with a widely known text, which must be close to our extant version of *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV. It therefore seems likely that the Continuator's text was both earlier and more reliable. Although it actually appears that Peter of Sicily's account is preferable in isolated instances, there is every indication that his

82 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:25, pp. 254–263.

83 al-Balādhurī, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, ed. and trans. Philip K. Hitti, Francis C. Murgotten, 2 vols, vol. 1 (New York/London, 1916), p. 289. See also Alexander A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes: T.1 La dynastie d'Amorium* (*820–867*), trans. Henri Grégoire, Marius Canard (Brussels, 1935), p. 466; Vest, *Melitene*, vol. 2, pp. 661–662.

84 Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 73, n. 64.

departure from the conventional narrative of Paulician history stems from his polemical purpose. Now we may progress to the best argument for proposing that Peter's act of forgery belongs to this era: the fact that its companion text the *Brief History* was certainly forged during the mid-10th century.

3 The *Brief History of the Manichaeans*

In marked contrast with the *History of the Paulicians*, which is credited to the otherwise unknown Peter of Sicily, the *Brief History of the Manichaeans* is conventionally attributed to one of the intellectual giants of the 9th century: the Patriarch of Constantinople Photios (858–867; 877–886). Photios' career was eventful to state the least. He exchanged mutual excommunications with the Pope Nicholas I (858–867) and was sent into exile by both Basil I and his son and successor Leo VI.[85] His patriarchates saw the first Rus' attack on Constantinople, the conversion of the Moravians and Bulgars to Christianity, as well as sporadic reengagement with the Armenian Church.[86] This rich legacy impinges upon confessional identities which still resonate today and thus, unsurprisingly, Photios' reputation has remained a point of contention even into modern times.[87] His notoriety also raises difficulties for our more prosaic concerns. The *Brief History of the Manichaeans* is part of compilation of four books traditionally known as the *Contra Manichaeos*. The *Brief History*, the first book of the collection, is a metaphrasis (that is, a rewriting of a text in a higher register) which reworks the *Treatise* and the *History of the Paulicians* in turn, the latter of which is abridged to excise many of Peter of Sicily's asides and most scathing rhetoric. In the following analysis, I shall argue that the *Brief History* was forged between 934 and 956 because it postdates the recovery of Melitene by Byzantine forces in 934 and because it predates the death of the

85 The most accessible account of these events remains Francis Dvornik, *The Photian Schism: History and Legend* (Cambridge, 1948). See especially pp. 91–198; 237–278.

86 For Photios and the Rus' attack, see Cyril Mango, *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople* (Cambridge, MA, 1958), pp. 74–82. For Photios and Bulgaria, see Liliana Simeonova, *Diplomacy of the Letter and the Cross: Photios, Bulgaria and the Papacy, 860s-880s* (Amsterdam, 1998). For Photios' correspondence with Armenia, see Igor Dorfmann-Lazarev, *Arméniens et Byzantins à l'époque de Photius: deux dèbats théologiques après le triomphe de l'orthodoxie* (Leuven, 2004); Tim W. Greenwood, "Failure of a Mission? Photius and the Armenian Church," *Le Muséon,* 119 (2006), pp. 123–167; Carl Dixon, "Heresy, Hostility and a Paradise in Full Bloom: Contextualising Photios' Letter to the Armenians," *Byzantion* 89 (2019), pp. 201–242.

87 Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 279–431.

Patriarch of Constantinople Theophylaktos Lekapenos (933–956), whose letter to Peter of Bulgaria has the *Brief History* as one of its sources. As for the remaining three books of the *Contra Manichaeos*, these take the form of two sermons and an exhortatory admonition which follow the *Brief History* in the majority of the surviving manuscripts. These have no discernible relationship to Peter of Sicily's sermons but do have all the hallmarks of genuinely Photian works and, as a result, will be attributed to the patriarch in what follows.[88]

A second point of contention stems from the contested reputation of Photios among his contemporaries. Several manuscripts of the *Contra Manichaeos*, including the earliest extant exemplar, *Palatinus graecus* 216, attribute the four books not to Photios, but instead to one of his most implacable adversaries, Metrophanes of Smyrna.[89] This manuscript is one of several that also attributes another of Photios' works, the *Mystagogia*, to Metrophanes.[90] Lemerle argued that the attribution of the texts in *Palatinus graecus* 216 to Metrophanes could be explained by contemporaries' attempts to preserve Photios' works when his reputation was at a low point.[91] This is a convincing argument, since Metrophanes' opposition to Photios was well known; tellingly, his own periods of exile alternated with those of the patriarch.[92] Despite this, it seems clear

88 Grégoire, "Les sources," pp. 113–114; Joachim Scharf, "Zur Echtheitsfrage der Manichäerbücher des Photios," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 44 (1951), pp. 487–490; Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy,* p. 39. For these sermons, see Photios, *Contra Manichaeos* II-IV, *Patrologia Graeca* 102, col. 85–264. Italian translation: *Fozio di Constantinopoli: Contro i Manichei*, ed. and trans. Mauro Mormino (Rome, 2019), pp. 121–250. Both edition and translation are based on the manuscripts *Parisinus Coislinianus* 270 and *Parisinus graecus* 1228, rather than the more authoritative *Palatinus graecus* 216.

89 For this enmity, see Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 5; 43–45; 192.

90 Valerio Polidori, "Photius and Metrophanes of Smyrna: the Controversy of the Authorship of the *Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*," *Medioevo greco: rivista di storia e filologia bizantina* 14 (2014), pp. 200–201. For the Mystagogia, see Photios, *La mistagogia del Santo Spirito*, ed. Valerio Polidori (Rome, 2018); Tia M. Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin Heretics: Byzantines and the Filioque in the Ninth Century* (Kalamazoo, 2008), pp. 76–102.

91 Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 38–39. See also Polidori, "Photius and Metrophanes," p. 202.

92 Erika Gielen, Peter Van Deun, "The Invocation of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel Attributed to Metrophanes Metropolitan of Smyrna (BHG 1292)," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 108 (2016), p. 653. Metrophanes also wrote on similar themes. For his sermons against Manichaeans, see Peter Van Deun, "La chasse aux trésors: la découverte de plusieurs œuvres inconnues de Métrophane de Smyrne (IX^{e}-X^{e}) siècles," *Byzantion* 78 (2008), pp. 350–351; Metrophanes of Smyrna, *Ein neuentdeckter Kommentar zum Johannesevangelium: Untersuchungen und Text*, ed. Karl Hansmann (Paderborn, 1930). For an anti-Jewish work, see Metrophanes of Smyrna, *Anonymi auctoris Theognosiae* (*saec. IX/X*) *Dissertatio contra Iudaeos*, ed. Michiel Hostens (Turnhout, 1986), pp. 3–285.

that our forgers intended the *Brief History* to be read as a work of Photios.[93] Until a short time ago, only a handful of works were ascribed to Metrophanes, but the recent identification of anonymous works with his style has expanded the scope of his oeuvre.[94] The majority of these works have been identified through Metrophanes' literary technique, which incorporates a number of idiosyncratic phrases, none of which are evident in the *Brief History*.[95] By contrast, this text is so similar to Photios' style that the work has been utilised in a linguistic analysis of Photios' use of heresiological terminology.[96] Given these observations and the attribution of the *Brief History* and its related texts to Photios in most other manuscripts, it is more appropriate to assign the work to Pseudo-Photios than Pseudo-Metrophanes. That being said, the text only emulates Photios' style and never seeks to convey his personality, to betray a knowledge of his other works, or to reference the events of his career. It even lacks reference to the context which occasioned its composition. Stylistic concerns apart, it is uncommonly characterless. In fact, there is scant indication that the author consulted any text aside from the *Treatise* and *History* while composing it and, as a result, it will rarely merit attention when we build our picture of Paulician history in later chapters.

With these formalities dispensed with, we may proceed to the *Brief History* itself. Like the *History of the Paulicians*, there are several oddities which suggest that the text is inauthentic. Firstly, according to existing interpretations Photios wrote this work during his first exile. The text has conventionally been dated to *c*.870–872 because it postdates the *History* and treats Chrysocheir as though he were still alive. Photios had been exiled since 867, when Basil I dispensed with Michael III and subsequently reinstalled Photios' predecessor Ignatios, deposed in 858, upon the patriarchal throne. Basil's recall of Photios cannot be exactly dated, but occurred sometime after 872.[97] Before this date he was

93 The attribution of the *Contra Manichaeos* to Metrophanes has traditionally been rejected. See Carl R. Moeller, *De Photii Petrique Siculi libris contra Manichaeos scriptis* (Bonn, 1910), pp. 9–11; Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 38–39.

94 Van Deun, "La chasse aux trésors," pp. 346–367.

95 See Van Deun, "La chasse aux trésors," pp. 353–360.

96 See Rosangela Salvemini, "Empieta e follia nella caratterizzazione degli eretici. Alle origini del lessico di Fozio," *Nicolaus. Rivista di teologia ecumenico-patristica* 27 (2000), pp. 355–389.

97 The date when Photios was recalled from his first exile is obscure. Varona Codeso and Prieto Domínguez variously give this as 872, or 873–74. Dvornik's more circumspect dating of after 872 should be favoured. See Patricia Varona Codeso, Óscar Prieto Domínguez, "Deconstructing Photios: Family Relationship and Political Kinship in Middle Byzantium," *Revue de études byzantines* 71 (2013), pp. 7; 18–19; Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, pp. 161–164.

confined, probably in the monastery of Skepe on the Bosphorus.[98] Curiously, however, there are no references to exile whatsoever in the *Brief History*. One of the major difficulties that Photios experienced during this exile was his lack of access to books, as he complains in a letter to Basil.[99] Although his treatment was subsequently relaxed, it is difficult to believe that he could have had access to and therefore metaphrased the *Treatise* and the *History* so soon after their supposed publication by Peter of Sicily.[100] Moreover, the subsequent influence of the *Brief History* suggests that it was not written by an exile during the 870s. After all, how could the work of an imperially appointed ambassador possibly be supplanted by that of an exile with numerous enemies at court and elsewhere, not least when that same court must have known of Peter's mission and hence Photios' plagiarism? Yet despite this, the *Brief History* is richly attested in manuscripts and its testimony is followed faithfully by later writers, while the *History*'s subsequent influence is inconsequential. All indications suggest that the contexts of both works are not what they seem.

There are few clues to be gained from the aims of the *Brief History*, which are singularly obscure. Given the vociferousness with which the *History* argues that the Paulicians should be subject to the death penalty, we might imagine that a swift riposte from Photios would argue forcefully against such a punishment, since he favours more conciliatory approaches elsewhere.[101] However, there are no allusions whatsoever to the punishment to which Paulicians should be subjected in the text. References to punishment in the genuinely Photian sermons which follow it are rare and imply a harsh approach, but this is unsurprising since they were written at the apogee of Paulician power. When read with a closer eye, they imply that severe punishments should only be applied in exceptional circumstances.[102] As for the *Brief History*, its silence on the most contentious emphasis of the *History* renders it difficult to identify

98 Janin favours this location, which is more likely than Shirinian's hypothesis that the monastery was near Lake Van. See Raymond Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin*, 3 vols, vol. 3 (Paris, 1969), p. 455; Manea E. Shirinian, "Armenian Elites in Constantinople," in *Armenian Constantinople*, eds. Richard G. Hovannisian, Simon Payaslian (Costa Mesa, 2010), p. 64. Moeller did not necessarily believe that the work was written in exile, but most later scholars have assumed this. Moeller, *De Photii Petrique*, p. 20; Scheidweiler, "Paulikianerprobleme," p. 36; Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 39.

99 Photios, *Epistulae*, in *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, *Ep.* 98, eds. Basil Laourdas, Leendert G. Westerink, 6. vols, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1983), p. 133, l. 17–21.

100 Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 99, vol. 1, pp. 136–137; Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 161–163.

101 See his letters to Chrysocheir, which attempt to bring about reconciliation. Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 33–40, vol. 1, pp. 85–89.

102 See Chapter 2. Photios, *Contra Manichaeos* II-IV, 3:19, col. 175–178. Photios, *Contra Manichaeos* II-IV, 4:3, col. 183–186.

a rationale for its composition. Matters of patronage do not help us with this enigma, since the text curiously omits the flattery of Basil I so beloved of Peter of Sicily, even though texts such as the *Vita Ignatii* claim that Photios' principal objective while in exile was to convince Basil to recall him by whatever means necessary.[103]

To the above issues can be added the stylistic deficiencies of the *Brief History*, most of which Grégoire demonstrated.[104] Although it cites a greater range of anti-Manichaean works than the *History*, these sources are never employed in the work.[105] The brief reference to Chrysocheir can hardly be reconciled with the fact that Photios wrote to this Paulician leader on several occasions.[106] Grégoire's most pressing criticism of the authenticity of the source was the *terminus post quem* that he posited. He noticed that the *Brief History* refers to Melitene as a former Muslim possession, although the city was only recaptured by Byzantine forces in 932.[107] The text must therefore be dated after this, although this date has subsequently been emended to 934.[108] Grégoire's argument is dependent on the single word *τότε* (then). Consequently, some scholars have maintained that this *terminus post quem* arose from a corruption of the text.[109] However, such a corruption is unlikely because the word is present in every manuscript of the *Brief History*.[110] Grégoire's objection is a serious one.

Lemerle makes an ingenious argument to account for this *terminus post quem*, asserting that the relevant phrase was originally a marginal note which

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103 See Niketas David, *Nicetas David, the Paphlagonian. The Life of Patriarch Ignatius*, 89–90, ed. and trans. Andrew Smithies (Washington, D.C., 2013), pp. 118–121.

104 Grégoire, "Les sources," pp. 109–111.

105 Grégoire, "Les sources," p. 112.

106 Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 33–40, vol. 1, pp. 86–89; *Ep*. 57, vol. 1, p. 104; *Ep*. 80, vol. 1, p. 121; *Ep*. 134, vol. 1, pp. 176–178.

107 Grégoire, "Les sources," pp. 95–96.

108 Melitene surrendered to the empire in 932, but its control was subsequently contested. It was only captured by John Kourkouas in 934. See Alexander A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes: T.2 La dynastie Macédonienne* (*867–959*), trans. Henri Grégoire, Marius Canard (Brussels, 1950), pp. 268–271.

109 Scheidweiler, Scharf, and Loos also believed that the passage in question arose from later interpolation. Scheidweiler, "Paulikianerprobleme," pp. 36–37; Scharf, "Zur Echtheitsfrage," p. 493; Milan Loos, "Deux contributions à l'histoire des Pauliciens. I: A propos des sources grecques reflétant des Pauliciens," *Byzantinoslavica* 17 (1956), p. 55. Loos changed his view subtly after the publication of the *Travaux et mémoires* edition, believing that Photios simply made a blunder while attempting an elegant paraphrase. See Milan Loos, "Deux publications fondamentales sur le paulicianisme d'Asie Mineure," *Byzantinoslavica* 35 (1974), pp. 197–198.

110 Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 137, p. 169.

was incorporated into the text.[111] At this point it must be remembered that the *Brief History* was metaphrased from the *History*. Therefore, if we were to find a passage akin to the relevant phrase within the corresponding part of the *History*, it would show that this phrase was not a marginal note. This proves to be the case. The relevant sections are worth quoting in full:

Brief History:

> Thus, after the inquiry, the judgement, and the reckoning had proceeded, the so-called *Kynochoritae* and those whom they named *Astatoi* decided on the slaughter of the aforementioned judges. These men [the *Astatoi*] were picked from the students of Sergios. And so the *Astatoi*, who were bound to no other except themselves, slew the already-mentioned *exarch* [Parakondakes] by means of deceit and treachery. On the other hand, since a leader for the crime was lacking among the *Kynochoritae*, one of the aforementioned *Astatoi* stood forward, and these men also slew the high priest of God, Thomas. When these transgressions had occurred without restraint, the previously mentioned *Astatoi* – for they were, it is said, the architects of each blood-letting – fled in haste with their followers from all the land which the law of the Christians governed, and arrived in Melitene, a city in the Second Armenia, whose government was then that of the Christ-hating Saracens, ruled by an emir whom they called Monocherares (*πολιτείαν οὖσαν τότε τῶν μισοχρίστων Σαρακηνῶν ἧς καὶ ἀμηρᾶς ἦρχεν, ὃν ἐπεκάλουν Μονοχεράρην*).[112]

History of the Paulicians:

> But later some of the students of Sergios, the so-called *Astatoi*, slaughtered the *exarch* by means of cunning and trickery, and the *Kynochoritae* likewise slaughtered Thomas the Metropolitan. Thus, the *Astatoi* fled to Melitene. The emir Monocherares then ruled the Saracens living there (*Ἀμηρᾶς δὲ τότε τῶν ἐκεῖσε ὄντων Σαρακηνῶν ὑπῆρχεν ὁ Μονοχεράρης*).[113]

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111 Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 39–40. Lemerle argues that the phrase *πολιτείαν οὖσαν τότε τῶν μισοχρίστων Σαρακηνῶν* comprises the marginal note, observing that *πολιτείαν οὖσαν* does not agree with *πόλει*, with which it should be in apposition. Nevertheless, it is possible to treat *πολιτείαν οὖσαν* as an accusative of respect, as Paramelle does in his translation. See Paramelle, trans., Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 137, p. 168.

112 Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 136–137, pp. 167–169.

113 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 178, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 90. The translation used here is my own.

The dependence of the *Brief History* on the *History of the Paulicians* is apparent in the above passage. Although Pseudo-Photios changes the syntax of the *History* and subtly alters its meaning, he retains most of the original vocabulary. In fact, we can pinpoint exactly the section he metaphrased while describing Melitene – and critically this includes the *τότε* upon which Grégoire's argument rested.[114] Further to this, we can posit a convincing rationale which shows why Pseudo-Photios made this mistake. His faithfulness to the *History* leads him to expand and clarify this text, employing the same vocabulary wherever possible. Thus, he offers more geographical precision by placing Melitene in the Second Armenia and, in an analogous way, attempts to be more temporally precise by using the *τότε* of the original text.[115] In doing so, he made the critical error of employing the geography of his time rather than that of the 870s. This was evidently Pseudo-Photios' mistake, as the manuscript tradition suggests.[116] It follows that the *Brief History* should be dated after 934 with greater certainty than at the time of Grégoire's observation – and on this occasion the philological evidence is truly decisive.

However, the same cannot necessarily be said for the palaeographical evidence. The crucial witness here is *Palatinus graecus* 216, the earliest extant copy of the *Brief History*. The manuscript has been dated between the last third of the 9th century and the first quarter of the 10th by Joseph Paramelle.[117] This dating is corroborated by Maria Agati, who prefers a date in the late 9th century.[118] Having consulted the manuscript myself, I thoroughly endorse their conclusions, but this entails serious difficulties for the interpretation presented above. After all, how can we date the *Brief History* to the mid-10th century if our earliest extant manuscript is around half a century older? This is obviously a major stumbling block. Yet it is crucial to note that exactly the same objection applies if we were to argue that the *Brief History* is genuine. As noted

114 The relevant section is signposted by the words *Μονοχεράρης*, *Ἀμηρᾶς*, and *ἦρχεν*/*ὑπῆρχεν* in both works. We see not only the crucial *τότε* between these, but also the repetition of *τῶν Σαρακηνῶν* and a particle form of *εἶμι*.

115 For further discussion of this passage, see Loos, "Deux publications fondamentales," pp. 197–198.

116 It was perhaps an easy mistake to make at Constantine VII's court, since references to the capture of Islamic cities in his reign are prominent in other texts, such as the foretelling of the capture of Adata in the *Vita Basilii*. See Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 48, pp. 170–175.

117 *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), p. 101.

118 Maria Luisa Agati, "Il problema della progressiva divisione delle parole tra IX e X secolo," in *I manoscritti greci tra riflessione e dibattito: atti del V Colloquio internazionale di paleografia greca*, ed. Giancarlo Prato (Florence, 2000), p. 193.

above, Lemerle accounts for Grégoire's *terminus post quem* by arguing that it was a marginal note that was incorporated into the text after 934. But *Palatinus graecus* 216 places the relevant phrasing within the main body, even though it seemingly dates well before 934. As a result of this, when Lemerle came to date this manuscript, he noted the paradox between the palaeographical and philological evidence, observing that he favours a date of *c.*900 on the former grounds, but that the textual evidence necessitates a later date.[119] Likewise, recent research on the *Mystagogia* has shown that the variant preserved within *Palatinus graecus* 216 should be dated later than the palaeographical evidence would warrant.[120] It therefore follows that this manuscript appears too early regardless of whether the *Brief History* is interpreted as a forgery or not.

There are two obvious ways to account for this difficulty. Firstly, it could be argued that the manuscript itself is of dubious authenticity. This is appropriate insofar as the hypothesis that our heresiological texts are forged naturally presupposes the existence of forged manuscripts. What is more, there are good grounds for supposing that *Palatinus graecus* 216 contains the archetypal text of the *Brief History*, since its orthography is excellent and its marginal notes do not suggest any dependence on earlier manuscripts.[121] Alternatively, a more flexible approach may be necessary when dating of manuscripts of this period. An interesting observation on the works of Metrophanes of Smyrna points in this direction. Peter Van Deun has accounted for the poor orthography of Metrophanes' writings by showing that he, or his scribe, still wrote in uncial script at the beginning of the 10th century.[122] Consequently, the script used was several decades out of date, that is, a similar margin of error to that of

119 Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 38–40. Leroy and Laourdas both favour a mid-10th century date, but it is unclear whether they do so on philological or palaeographical grounds. For Leroy, see Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 38, n. 48; Basil Laourdas, "Τὰ εἰς τὰ << Ἀμφιλόχια >> τοῦ Φωτίου σχόλια τοῦ κώδικος 449 τῆς Λαύρας," *ELLHNIKA* 12 (1953), p. 270.

120 Polidori, "Photius and Metrophanes," pp. 200–201.

121 For the manuscript tradition, see *Travaux et mémoires* 4, pp. 99–118. There are four marginal corrections within the *Brief History*, none of which indicate a dependence upon earlier manuscripts. The marginal additions of *ποθεν* and *μακροῖς* are incorporated into all subsequent manuscripts. See Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 37; 150, pp. 131; 173 respectively. The final correction of *αὐτὸν* is omitted in some manuscripts. Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 120, p. 163. The only lengthy correction corresponds to the words *προσκυνεῖν, οὐ μὴν ἔνθα τοῦ τιμίου σταυροῦ ὁ τύπος*. The prefix *προσ* from *προσκυνεῖν* is present in the manuscript and the rest of the word could be supplied from the wider context of the passage. Moreover, the phrase *τὸ ἀπεικόνισμα τοῦ σταυροῦ* could have been used to paraphrase *τοῦ τιμίου σταυροῦ ὁ τύπος*. The suggested words suffice to make the clause comprehensible in light of the rest of the passage. See Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 35, pp. 130–131.

122 Van Deun, "La chasse aux trésors," p. 366.

Palatinus graecus 216. I still have misgivings on the authenticity of our manuscript, but without definitive proof that it is suspect, it is most judicious to note that the difficulties it poses are not without parallel in our period. The crucial point of significance is that the apparently early date of this manuscript does not substantiate the authenticity of the *Brief History*.

For our aims, it is not enough to demonstrate the inauthenticity of the *Brief History*. We must also uncover its aims and situate it within its proper intellectual context, which necessarily involves explaining its relationship with the *History*. This endeavour properly belongs in the following chapter, but it is worthwhile to note instances where these concerns impact our interest in forgery here. The most obvious fact is that since both of our main sources concerning the Paulicians are forgeries, they must have occasioned a great deal of effort. They not only had to be substantiated within the philological and palaeographical context of the 9th century, but the circumstances of their discovery had to be convincing enough to alleviate any suspicions of forgery. For this degree of effort to be considered worthwhile not once but twice, the concerns which animated these texts must have been very important indeed. The close textual relationship of these forgeries reinforces this impression and opens the possibility that the same forgers were responsible for both texts. Intertextual references within the two texts further support this theory, as do the instances where the *Brief History* corrects the *History*.[123] As noted above, the *Brief History* is a curiously characterless work that conveys nothing of Photios' personality even as it aspires to his style. It seems probable that this was a deliberate strategy which counterpoises the text to the belligerent, verbose, but not necessarily well-received *History*, while aspiring to similar ends. I remarked above the consensus opinion that *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV was composed in order to redress the deficiencies of Genesios' *Basileion* and it may well be that, in an analogous fashion, the unconvincing political context and rabidly polemical tone of the *History* were not received favourably, thereby leading to the composition of the conventional, but mundane, *Brief History*.

That the *Brief History* did supersede the *History* is apparent from its subsequent reception. The *Letter of Theophylaktos Lekapenos* draws heavily upon it, as do later texts such as Euthymios Zigabenos' *Dogmatic Panoply*.[124]

123 Appendix 1.

124 Euthymios notes his debt to 'Photios' in the title of his chapter on the Paulicians. As Kusabu has shown, although Euthymios depends heavily on the material attributed to Photios, he carefully reworks and revises this to form the nexus of a different account, rather than parroting his source. See Euthymios Zigabenos, *An Annotated Edition of Euthymios Zigabenos, Panoplia Dogmatikē, Chapters 23–28*, 25:1, ed. Metin B. Berke, PhD Thesis (Queen's University Belfast, 2012), p. 46, l. 1–2; Hisatsugu Kusabu, *Comnenian*

Nevertheless, it is difficult to judge its impact due to the obscurity of its aims. In its original context, it could conceivably have supported or subverted the *History*'s espousal of capital punishment. In summary, the *Brief History* is something of a metaphrastic iceberg: the extant textual and palaeographical evidence probably convey only ten percent of its meaning, while the unseen ninety percent comprises the religio-political context which engendered the text, the manner in which it was forged, the way that forgery was corroborated and then deployed in order to advance the aims of its authors and patrons. As a result, when we come to contextualise our texts within their 10th-century context, a definitive interpretation will be neither possible nor desirable. A little assistance is, however, offered by the one 10th-century source whose authenticity is not subject to doubt.

4 The Letter of Theophylaktos Lekapenos to Peter of Bulgaria

Scant attention has traditionally been devoted to the *Letter of Theophylaktos Lekapenos* to Peter I of Bulgaria for the understandable reason that it is dependent upon what were perceived to be much earlier sources.[125] Given our findings on the *History* and *Brief History*, the political and intellectual contexts of this letter and, more particularly, its relationship with the aforementioned texts become imperative concerns. The letter is the only surviving witness of a prolonged exchange.[126] It was written by the *cartophylax* John, the keeper of the patriarchal records, on Theophylaktos' behalf, although it is not clear if the same is true of any of the previous correspondence.[127] Theophylaktos was the Patriarch of Constantinople from 933–956 and these dates have traditionally provided the *termini* for the letter, although, as we shall see, the text is

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Orthodoxy and Byzantine Heresiology in the Twelfth Century: A Study of the Panoplia Dogmatica of Euthymios Zigabenos, PhD Thesis (University of Chicago, 2013), pp. 125–130. On the reception of the *Dogmatic Panoply*, see Nadia Miladinova, *The Panoplia Dogmatike by Euthymios Zygadenos* (Leiden, 2014).

125 On the letter, see Ivan Dujčev, ed., "L'epistola sui Bogomili del patriarca constantinopolitano Teofilatto," *Mélanges E. Tisserant II. Studi e Testi* 232 (1964), pp. 283–316; Georgi Minczew, "Remarks on the Letter of the Patriarch Theophylact to Tsar Peter in the Context of Certain Byzantine and Slavic Anti-Heretic Texts," *Studia Ceranea* 3 (2013), pp. 113–130.

126 A single manuscript (*Ambrosianus graecus* E9 sup.) survives. See Dujčev, ed., "L'epistola sui Bogomili," pp. 283–284.

127 For the reference to John, see Theophylaktos Lekapenos, "L'epistola sui Bogomili del patriarca constantinopolitano Teofilatto," ed. Ivan Dujčev, in *Mélanges E. Tisserant II* (Vatican City, 1964), p. 311. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 98.

dependent on the *Brief History*, and is therefore also later than the *History*.[128] The most probable date for the letter's composition thus rests between 945 and 956, or between 934 and 956 if we adopt a flexible approach to the dating of the *History*.

Helpfully, the letter informs us about the prior correspondence between Theophylaktos and Peter. The *cartophylax* John notes that Peter had written in reply to a previous letter from the patriarchate, which asked for more information on the heresy that currently afflicted his lands. In our letter, John identifies this heresy as a mix of "Manichaeanism and Paulianism," which is how the *Treatise* characterises Paulician belief, although modern scholars have generally thought that the heretics that Peter inquired about were actually Bogomils, largely because the letter describes many in the priesthood ascribing to the heresy.[129] This is considered inimical to Paulician belief, which placed little emphasis on asceticism.[130] In any case, the *cartophylax* observes that Peter had given more information on the heresy in his previous letter and had asked for a reply written in clear and simple terms.[131] From this, we can assume that our letter was the fourth in this correspondence which was specifically devoted to identifying this heresy: Peter first wrote to the patriarchate informing him of the heresy, as a result of which the patriarchate sent a reply which Peter deemed unsatisfactory, so Peter wrote back giving further details on the heresy, thereby allowing the *cartophylax* to write our surviving letter. Even considering some amount of misunderstanding in the early stages of this correspondence, it follows that classifying the heresy was not straightforward. Perhaps in his role as archivist John had conducted further research to this end since the letter derives much of its knowledge about the Paulicians from the *Brief History*. This debt is particularly apparent in the abjuration formula which is appended to the letter. So far as I am aware, the letter has no textual debt to the *History of the Paulicians*. This is perhaps surprising given the pronounced similarities between the letter and the *History*. Both sources refer to heresy in Bulgaria and

128 For this dating, see Dujčev, ed., "L'epistola sui Bogomili," p. 310; Venance Grumel, *Les regestes des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*, vol. 1, fasc. 2 (Paris, 1936), pp. 223–224.

129 Theophylaktos Lekapenos, "L'epistola sui Bogomili," p. 312. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 98–99. For Bogomil links, see Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee: A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy* (Cambridge, 1947), pp. 67–68; 87–88; Dimitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 111–117.

130 See Bernard Hamilton, "Introduction," in *Hugh Eteriano: Contra Patarenos*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton, Sarah Hamilton (Leiden, 2004), pp. 33–34; 37.

131 Theophylaktos Lekapenos, "L'epistola sui Bogomili," p. 312, l. 23–27. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 98.

both are concerned with how these heretics should be punished. Furthermore, both sources incorporate an epistolary form, although the *History* is obviously more problematic in this regard.

However, there is a significant difference between the two: the *Letter of Theophylaktos* espouses a decidedly more clement approach to punishment. Although the *Letter* states that it assigns appropriate punishments on the basis of a threefold division of heretics, it covers many more eventualities than this, particularly in the case of those who were misled into following the heresy.[132] In the vast majority of cases, the punishments are founded upon a desire to readmit the heretic into the church. For instance, rebaptism by holy chrism is appropriate for those who are not among the heresy's leaders. Even priests who were misled into espousing the heresy may retain their priesthood upon abjuration. Only the most unrepentant heretics merit capital punishment and even here it is made clear that this is undesirable and a last resort.[133] At the end of the letter, Peter is once more reminded that salvation should be his primary goal. The contrast with the *History* could not be starker. Insofar as the cartophylax's advice expresses the view of the patriarchate, it is indicative of official policy, although it is possible that a different approach may have been adopted within Byzantine territory. We should not rule out the eventuality that Byzanto-Bulgar relations led the patriarchate to adopt a different approach in this instance. Be that as it may, the even-handed approach of the *Letter* suggests that the *History of the Paulicians* did not successfully influence official policy. If the cartophylax knew of this text, it seems that he would have not viewed it favourably.

This is borne out by the text of the *Letter*, which betrays no discernible debt to the *History* and instead draws its testimony from the *Brief History*. To date, interest in the sources of the *Letter* has been limited, perhaps understandably considering that it was often considered a much later text than these sources. The topic was broached by Grégoire in the 1930s, but he saw little reason to question that the *Letter*'s source was Peter of Sicily's *History*.[134] Ivan Dujčev, by contrast, observed that, while the *History* may have been the ultimate source, it

132 A tripartite division of heretics based on the seriousness of their departure from orthodoxy was a commonplace in Byzantine writings. The prototypical example lies in Timothy of Constantinople's treatise on admittance into the church. See Daniel J. Sahas, "Ritual of Conversion from Islam to the Byzantine Church," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 36:1 (1991), pp. 64–65; Timothy of Constantinople, *De iis qui ad ecclesiam accedunt sive de receptione haereticorum*, *Patrologia Graeca* 86:1, col. 69–72.

133 Theophylaktos Lekapenos, "L'epistola sui Bogomili," pp. 312–313, l. 28–63. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 98–99.

134 Grégoire, "Autour des Pauliciens," pp. 613–614.

was equally possible that this dependence was transmitted through one of the its derivate texts.[135] This position was nuanced by Gouillard, who thought that several of the *Letter*'s anathemata (namely seven, eleven, twelve, and fourteen) indicated a greater dependence on the *Brief History*.[136] Neither of the latter two authors definitively argued either way, perhaps understandably given that the *Letter* could be drawn from both sources, but a study of the *Letter*'s anathemata upholds Gouillard's view that its primary debt is to the *Brief History*. Anathema 12, which states that the Paulicians obtained their name from both Paul and John, the sons of Kallinike, is decisive in this regard.[137] This can only be a reference to the *Brief History*, since the *History* states that the Paulicians received their name from Paul alone.[138] The other anathemata which Gouillard notes similarly suggest a greater dependence on the *Brief History*.[139] Naturally, this does not preclude the eventuality that the author of the *Letter* also consulted the *History*, but as noted above, their diametrically opposed views on punishment suggest that if the *cartophylax* did know of the *History*, he may have put less store by its testimony. That being said, the interpolated address to the Archbishop of Bulgaria in the *History* tentatively suggests a connection of some kind between Peter of Sicily's work and the letter. It is tempting to read the exchange between Theophylaktos and Peter of Bulgaria as the inspiration for this reframing, but this is not the only possibility. The relocation of Paulicians from Antioch to Philippopolis by John I Tzimiskes *c.*970–972 could have provided a similar impulse. The reworking of the *History* is perhaps best linked to more general concerns about heresy in Bulgaria, rather than fixing its revision to a particular context.

5 The *Treatise against the Paulicians*

Having dispensed with our 10th-century sources, we can finally turn our attention to the source contemporary to the Paulicians' 9th-century heyday: the

135 Dujčev, ed., "L'epistola sui Bogomili," p. 307.

136 Jean Gouillard, ed., *Travaux et mémoires* 4, p. 187.

137 Theophylaktos Lekapenos, "L'epistola sui Bogomili," p. 314, l. 106–109. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 101.

138 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 85, pp. 36–37. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 75.

139 The verb *φρίσσω* employed in anathema 11 is typical of Photios (and in this case the author impersonating him) whereas this is never used by Peter of Sicily. See Theophylaktos Lekapenos, "L'epistola sui Bogomili," p. 314, l. 98–106. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 101.

Treatise against the Paulicians. This text has conventionally been attributed to Peter the Hegoumen, but this name is found only in a single manuscript and presumably arises from a connection with Peter of Sicily, whom we have seen cannot be considered an early source for the heresy.[140] Opinion has remained divided regarding the precedence of the text: Grégoire and Lemerle believed that it was an epitomised version of the *History* and should therefore be dated after the latter text, whereas Ter Mkrttschian, Loos, Scheidweiler, and Garsoïan believed it was the earliest of our polemical texts.[141] These interpretations were naturally conditioned by the century-long tug of war over the authenticity of the *History* and *Brief History*, in which the *Treatise* was often assigned a key role. In what follows, I fall firmly into the camp arguing for the priority of the text, proposing that it was originally composed in an iconoclast milieu, *c*.834/35-843.

The precedence of the *Treatise* is convincing for several reasons. It survives in a comparatively large number of manuscripts and was interpolated into the *Chronicon* of George the Monk at an early date.[142] As Dmitri Afinogenov has shown, the first recension of the *Chronicon* dates to *c*.846/47.[143] The only significant surviving manuscript of this recension concludes with the interpolated *Treatise*, which is placed after the reign of Constantine V (741–775).[144] By contrast, the *Treatise* is incorporated within the main body of the second recension of the *Chronicon* between the reigns of Constans II (641–668) and Constantine IV (668–685).[145] This expanded version of the text, whose additions from the

140 See Charles Astruc, ed., *Travaux et mémoires* 4, p. 71. For the association of Peter of Sicily with Peter the Hegoumen, see Johann C.L. Gieseler, "Appendix ad Petri Siculi historiam Manichaeorum seu Paulicianorum," *Academiae Georgiae Augustae prorector cum senatu Sacra Christi Natalitia anno MDCCCXLIX pie celebranda indicunt* (Göttingen, 1849), pp. 58–59; Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 29–30.

141 See Grégoire, "Les sources," pp. 101–109; Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 26–31; Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer*, pp. 1–4; Scheidweiler, "Paulikianerprobleme," pp. 10–29; Loos, "Deux contributions I," pp. 31–36; Loos, "Deux publications fondamentales," pp. 190–191; 195–196; Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy,* pp. 43–54. Since I subscribe to the precedence of the *Treatise*, I have adopted Garsoïan's name for the source, rather than the misleading *Épitomé* or *Précis* of Grégoire and Lemerle. See Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 40; 44.

142 For the manuscript tradition of the text, see Astruc, ed., *Travaux et mémoires* 4, pp. 69–78.

143 Afinogenov, "Le manuscrit grec," p. 246. See also Afinogenov, "The Date of Georgios," p. 446.

144 George the Monk, *Georgii Monachi chronicon*, ed. Carl de Boor, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1904), p. 765 (apparatus). The manuscripts are *Parisinus Coislinianus* 305 and *Vindobonensis jur. gr. 6*. The former is incomplete, whereas the latter comprises only a single folio. See Afinogenov, "Le manuscrit grec," p. 241.

145 George the Monk, *Chronicon*, 24, vol. 2, pp. 718–725. Note that Peter of Sicily places Constantine-Silvanos' activity during these years.

first were added by another editor rather than George, was probably compiled during the last third of the 9th century, since it culminates with an account of the reign of Michael III (842–867).[146] Although we cannot be exactly sure when these interpolations occurred (and they probably happened at different times in different variants of the *Chronicon*) the second half of the 9th century presents the most likely hypothesis, especially because the Paulicians were a pressing concern in the empire from Theodora's persecutions (843/44) to the fall of Tephrikē (878/79). This poses a conundrum for those who maintain the precedence of the *History*, since the *Treatise* seems to have been circulating before they argue its parent text was composed, but because the interpolation events cannot be dated precisely the evidence is not decisive.[147]

A more compelling argument for the precedence of the *Treatise* is that all of the later polemical works preserve it in some form. The sole manuscript of the *History* is preceded by a now fragmentary copy of the *Treatise* attributed to Peter of Sicily, whereas the *Brief History* begins with a metaphrasis of the text. Briefer sources such as the abjuration formulae and *Letter of Theophylaktos Lekapenos* have a similar format to the *Treatise* and retain its focus on Paulician belief.[148] Finally, as already noted, the text is preserved within all variants of George the Monk's *Chronicon*. Consequently, the textual tradition shows that it is the most widely disseminated text. An analysis of the text's contents shows that it was the earliest, but, surprisingly, it is not especially illuminating for investigating the history and beliefs of the Paulicians, since the later forged texts make fuller use of Paulician sources. Although the *Treatise*'s author almost certainly had access to the *Didaskalie* and the *Letters of Sergios*, he does not use them extensively.[149]

146 Afinogenov, "The Date of Georgios," p. 445.

147 As a result, proponents of this view have maintained a later date for the *Chronicon* (albeit without offering evidence for doing so). On this, see Grégoire, "Sur l'histoire," pp. 225–226; Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 5. Compare Afinogenov, "The Date of Georgios," pp. 439–441; Afinogenov, "Le manuscrit grec," p. 246.

148 Our extant variants of these formulae suggest a degree of influence from the *History* or *Brief History* and should therefore probably be dated to the 10th century. In the case of Formulae I and III, this debt seems evident in the references to Sergios' *synekdemoi*, who are otherwise only attested in our 10th-century forgeries. Formula II is appended to the *Letter of Theophylaktos* and therefore more certainly dates to the 10th century. Formula IV, on the other hand, is trickier to date, but it may be a variant of Formula III. On these formulae, see *Abjuration Formula I-IV*, ed. and trans. Jean Gouillard, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 190–207. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), pp. 103–110.

149 In the case of the *Didaskalie*, this is evident in the *Treatise*'s knowledge of the *didaskaloi*, particularly in the identification of Zacharias as "a mercenary and not a true shepherd," which derives from the Paulician exemplar. See *Treatise*, 5, ed. and trans. Charles Astruc,

As for the source, it is somewhat difficult to characterise. Garsoïan has described it as "a sort of inquisitor's manual" and while this description is valid insofar as it is a practical text concerned with identifying heretics, it is problematic given our ignorance of how Romans identified and combatted heresy.[150] Nevertheless, Garsoïan was perhaps correct when she ascribed a "semi-official" character to it, since although it circulated widely and influenced later texts, its anonymous character and uncertain legal context do not suggest that it stemmed from the patriarchal authorities.[151] Loos' assumption that it was originally of monastic provenance seems likely.[152] As for the legal context, this defies a straightforward solution because the prosecution of heresy necessitated collaboration between secular and ecclesiastical authorities. The former were responsible for punishing heretics and, as a result, the *Treatise* never articulates the penalties associated with the heresy. In addition, it implies that other texts were used to combat Paulicians, since it notes that they anathematised Mani together with Paul and John, the sons of Kallinike, thereby suggesting that in earlier periods they were examined with Manichaean abjuration formulae.[153] As we shall see, references within the *Treatise* also show that its author used creedal statements in his encounters with Paulicians. The source therefore operated within a wider framework of texts, probably with a variety of functions, since its incorporation into the *Chronicon* hardly stems from pastoral concerns or an attempt to enforce orthodoxy.

Since the *Treatise* occupies a pivotal position in early Byzantine understandings of the heresy, it merits a full discussion here. It has a loose bipartite structure which describes Paulician history and beliefs in succession, but there is a crucial difference between these parts, since the historical section depends on Paulician sources (both the *Didaskalie* and *Letters of Sergios*), while the section on belief derives from an orthodox standpoint and hence

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Travaux et mémoires 4 (1970), p. 82. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 93; Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 125, pp. 50–51. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 82. Its knowledge of the *Letters of Sergios* is apparent in its reference to the Paulician churches since Peter of Sicily notes that this reference appears in the letters. See *Treatise*, 7, p. 84. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 93–94; Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 163, pp. 60–61. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 88.

150 Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 52–53.

151 Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, p. 54.

152 Loos, "Deux contributions I," p. 36. Loos favours a monastic origin, but he proposes that the monastic in question was actually Peter of Sicily, who wrote the work prior to his mission to Tephrikē. This view cannot be sustained in view of the arguments presented above.

153 *Manichaean Formula*, in *Texte zum Manichäismus*, ed. Alfred Adam (Berlin, 1954), pp. 97–103.

is less trustworthy. Interestingly, the *Treatise* departs from earlier understandings of Paulician belief by considering Paul, the son of Kallinike, as its ultimate inspiration, in contrast to the earliest Byzantine source to attest the heresy, Theophanes' *Chronographia*, which considers them Manichaeans.[154] There is still admittedly some emphasis on Manichaeism in the *Treatise*, but it does not identify any Manichaean heresiarchs among the precursors of the *didaskaloi*. This change of emphasis could conceivably be indebted to a knowledge of Paulician sources, since the *Didaskalie* traces their religiosity to a Paul, although this is the apostle, not Paul, son of Kallinike, so in this case a misreading of the source would be evident.[155] Such a misreading is perhaps apparent in the unusual characterisation of Paul, who, as we have already seen, appears to be confused with Paul of Samosata in some witnesses to the polemical tradition. Besides this, the *Treatise* is notable for being concise, systematic, and comparatively unpolemical. It probably served mainly as a practical guide for those tasked with identifying Paulicians, but it could also operate as a pastoral warning if read before Roman audiences.

Among those scholars who considered the *Treatise* to be the earliest representative of the heresiological tradition, only Garsoïan attempted to provide a date for the text. She dated it to the patriarchate of Methodios (843–847), that is during Theodora's regency for her infant son Michael III, believing that the text was consistent with both the restoration of orthodoxy and Theodora's persecutions.[156] These persecutions may explain the subsequent dissemination of the text, but the interpretation offered here implies that the *Treatise* originally belonged to an iconoclast milieu. Determining a *terminus post quem* is straightforward, since it speaks of the last *didaskalos* Sergios in the past tense and the *History* states that Sergios died in 834/35.[157] It betrays no knowledge of Karbeas, the infamous Paulician leader from 844 onward and so was probably authored prior to the mid-840s; an impression which is corroborated by the traces of iconoclast authorship.

While the historical material preserved within the *Treatise* has its origin in Paulician sources, the heretical tenets that the text ascribes to the Paulicians

154 *Treatise*, 1–2, p. 80. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 93; Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, ed. Carl de Boor, 2 vols, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1883), p. 488, l. 22–23. English translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, eds. and trans. Cyril Mango, Roger Scott (Oxford, 1997), p. 671.

155 *Treatise*, 6; 9; 18. pp. 83; 85; 90. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 93–95.

156 Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 53–54.

157 See also Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, p. 53. The *History*'s dates are always worthy of suspicion, but in Sergios' case seem reliable.

come from the perspective of a Roman writer. This is evident from its account of their alleged dualism:

> They [the Paulicians] have the first heresy of the Manichaeans, confessing two principles as those men do. They say that: "There is only one difference between us and the Romans, that we say that the Father in heaven is one God, who has no authority in this world, but does in the world to come, and that another God is the creator of the cosmos, who has authority in the present world. The Romans confess that one and the same God is the Father in heaven and the creator of all the world." They call themselves Christians and us Romans.
>
> And they eagerly say to those who do not know them: "We believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the heavenly Father, and anathema to whoever does not believe as we do." They studiously conceal their evil, for when they say "the Father in heaven" they do not add "the only true God, the maker of heaven and earth and everything in them." It is necessary for the orthodox interrogator to ask the Manichaean to say the creed which begins "I believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, the maker of heaven and earth, of all things seen and invisible" and the things which follow.[158]

The extract, which is by far the fullest explanation of any heretical tenet in the *Treatise*, begins by explaining Paulician cosmology, in the process masquerading as the voice of a Paulician discoursing amongst coreligionists. It then discloses how the Paulicians conceal their belief from the orthodox, before explaining how an orthodox believer may unmask this strategy. Thus, the account of this tenet has been framed by a Roman writer to give others a means of identifying heretics. It is not accurate, however, because the initial statement is not a profession of belief promulgated among Paulicians in secret, as the passage would like us to think, but rather a statement put into their mouth by the *Treatise*'s author, whose thought throughout this passage is preconditioned by his method of interrogating heretics using the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. When the Paulician speaks among their peers, for instance, God is conceptualised in terms of the Father, rather than the Trinity, which indicates that the terms of debate have already been circumscribed by the emphasis on the Father in the creedal statement, even though reference to the latter only comes at the end of the passage. The text's Paulician voice

158 *Treatise*, 9–10, pp. 85–86. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 94.

is therefore even more elusive and problematic than first impressions suggest. Like many heresiological compositions, the *Treatise* is a richer source for understanding orthodox beliefs and preconceptions than for learning about heretics. Consequently, the order in which Paulician errors are described can also be interpreted as arising from orthodox concerns, since these are listed in an order corresponding to the seriousness of their transgression of orthodoxy.

The first tenet listed by the *Treatise* is the Paulicians' dualism; a belief which contradicts the basis of Christian cosmology. The second is the rejection of the sanctity of the Virgin, who had been considered the protector of Constantinople from the end of the 6th century and even more so after the Avar-Sasanian siege of 626.[159] As a result, a repudiation of Marian sanctity could be interpreted as an attack on the city, or on the empire more generally. In this sense, the first two tenets could be interpreted as assailing the Christian religion and the empire, thereby suggesting that the author listed the beliefs most likely to shock a Roman audience first. Given this fact, the next two tenets are of crucial importance to us. These are the rejection of the cross and the eucharist: the two true images of Christ according to iconoclast theology.[160] As we have seen, the form and content of the text have been conditioned by its author, who has brought his conceptions of orthodoxy into the text. This orthodoxy certainly seems to be an iconoclast one and the theory only becomes more convincing the deeper we dig into the polemical tradition. Most notably of all, icons are never mentioned in the *Treatise*, even though Armenian sources allege that earlier Paulicians in the Caucasus were characterised by their rejection of

159 *Treatise*, 11, p. 87. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 94; Averil Cameron, "The Virgin's Robe: An Episode in the History of Early-Seventh Century Constantinople," *Byzantion* 49 (1979), pp. 42–56. For our period, where the evidence is relatively meagre, see Dirk Krausmüller, "Making the Most of Mary: The Cult of the Virgin in the Chalkoprateia from Late Antiquity to the Tenth Century," in *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images*, eds. Leslie Brubaker, Mary B. Cunningham (Aldershot, 2011), pp. 219–245. More recently, see Mary B. Cunningham, *The Virgin Mary in Byzantium, c.400–1000: Hymns, Homilies and Hagiography* (Cambridge, 2021). For iconoclast devotion to Mary, see Kenneth Parry, *Depicting the Word: Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 191–201; Niki Tsironis, "The Mother of God in the Iconoclastic Controversy," in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Athens/Milan, 2000), pp. 27–39.

160 *Treatise*, 12–13, pp. 87–88. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 94–95. For iconoclast reverence of the cross, see Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 140–143. For the eucharist, see Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 181; 192; 374. The Paulician rejection of the church hierarchy would also be received unfavourably by iconoclasts, who placed considerable emphasis on obedience to authority. See Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 376–383; 392–400.

images.[161] The reason is obvious: the *Treatise*'s author belonged to the iconoclast party and, as such, would only have noted his concern if the Paulicians were conspicuous venerators of images. The iconoclast authorship of the tract also influenced later sources appreciably, since accusations that the Paulicians rejected images are rare until the 10th century, particularly in heresiological texts.[162] Photios' letters to Chrysocheir are the only unequivocal allegation of iconoclasm in the 9th century and even in this case the patriarch never seems to have reached a clear understanding of his correspondent's beliefs.[163] All of this explains the curious inattention to images in later works. Neither Peter of Sicily nor Pseudo-Photios accuse the Paulicians of rejecting images and both seem almost oblivious of the iconomachy, as is apparent in their bizarrely neutral characterisation of the iconoclast Leo III.[164] Surprisingly, the first allegation that Paulicians rejected images within heresiological texts occurs in 10th-century abjuration formulae.[165] Needless to say, all of this implies that the Paulicians were not associated with iconoclasm in practice, contrary to what has traditionally been assumed. As for the *Treatise*, the observations offered above suggest that it was written after the death of Sergios *c.*834–35 and before the restoration of icon veneration in 843, since it seems improbable that an iconoclast work could be written and widely disseminated after this date.

There is an intriguing postscript to this interpretation, however. As we have already seen, *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV places the beginning of the Paulician presence at Argaous after Karbeas' defection, when the site was granted to him by 'Amr al-Aqṭa'.[166] Since Karbeas' break with the empire occurred after the restoration of the icons during Theodora's regency, we would not expect to find any references to Argaous in the *Treatise*, but this proves not to be the case. Among the churches founded by Sergios-Tychikos, the text identifies the Church of the Kolossians with the Argaoutes, who are assuredly the

161 See especially Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy,* pp. 164–165; 201–207.

162 Note, however, the implied association of iconoclasts and Paulicians in the *Third Antirrhetikos* of the patriarch Nikephoros I. Nikephoros, *Third Antirrhetikos*, 68, *Patrologia Graeca* 100, col. 501.

163 Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 37–39, vol. 1, pp. 87–88; Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 134, vol. 1, pp. 176–178.

164 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 114, pp. 46–47. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 80; Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 74, pp. 146–147.

165 *Abjuration Formula III*, ed. and trans. Jean Gouillard, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 200–201 l. 35; pp. 202–203, l. 81–85. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), pp. 106; 108. *Abjuration Formula* IV, pp. 202–203, l. 8. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 108. On these formulae, see also note 148 above.

166 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:16, pp. 236–237, l. 21–22.

inhabitants of Argaous.[167] Although it is possible that the text was amended at a later date, the most probable explanation for this inconsistency is that some Paulicians had already settled at Argaous before the advent of the Islamic alliance. Peter of Sicily tells us that Sergios-Tychikos died in the mountains near Argaous, which gives a corroborating witness for a Paulician presence there before Karbeas.[168] If so, while Peter's account of a large-scale flight to Melitene before the 840s remains deeply suspect, it seems that the Continuator's claim that 'Amr bestowed the site on Karbeas is also wide of the mark. Despite the fact that the *History* is a forgery, it is not necessarily less reliable than our other sources on all counts. For the present purposes, we must acknowledge that this inconsistency cautions against dating either the *Treatise* or the Paulician presence on the eastern frontier too precisely. It is conceivable, for instance, that the *Treatise* had a limited circulation until the persecutions of Theodora markedly increased its readership, potentially leading to revisions in the process. If so, the dating adopted here is not necessarily mutually exclusive with that formulated by Garsoïan.

To recap briefly, the analysis offered above suggests that the *History of the Paulicians,* the *Brief History*, and the *Letter of Theophylaktos* were composed in the order stated here, possibly between 945–956, and more certainly between 934–956, at least in the form in which they are now extant. On the surface, this suggests a close relationship between these texts which is perhaps illusory. The *Letter of Theophylaktos* only identified the Bulgarian heretics as Paulicians after a prolonged exchange of letters, thereby suggesting that neither the *cartophylax* John, nor the patriarchate more generally, had Paulicians on the brain. This in turn implies that the letter was written in a context far removed from the forged texts, so the sources seem to have addressed a sporadically recurring issue rather than a single religio-political controversy. As a result, in the following chapter, we shall assume that the aims, contexts, and interrelations of these texts were not consistent across the tradition. This will have most impact upon our understanding of the *History*, whose genesis seems to have been protracted indeed.

As for our historical understanding of the Paulicians, the most significant conclusion of this chapter is that the *History*'s account of their flight to Melitene distorts the testimony of *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV and, as such, is not reliable. It seems that some Paulicians did make small-scale reprisals against Romanía in response to the persecutions of Michael I and Leo V, but

167 *Treatise*, 7, p. 84. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 93–94.

168 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 179–181, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 90–91.

our sources suggest that systemic, widespread resistance only began after Theodora's persecutions. The dating that the *History* advocates does not align with other sources, or the contemporary political situation in the 'Abbāsid Caliphate or Emirate of Melitene, although a modest Paulician presence on the eastern frontier before Karbeas' defection cannot be ruled out. Beyond this, it is noteworthy that the authenticity of both the *History* and *Brief History* are cast into doubt at precisely the point that this flight occurs. This is hardly a coincidence. As we shall see in the following chapter, earlier Byzantine sources which describe the Paulicians can be divided into two groups: texts composed in the first half of the 9th century which sought to formalise the doctrinal threat that the Paulicians posed; and 10th-century histories which described the Paulician military threat under Karbeas and Chrysocheir and encompassed this within a narrative which extolled the Macedonian Dynasty. The contrasting concerns of these groups of sources served to bifurcate Paulician history into religious and militaristic phases which are scarcely reconcilable with one another. Peter of Sicily was the first to bridge this gap, but as he did so he sought to emphasise the religious threat of the *didaskaloi* for his own polemical ends, in the process betraying his act of forgery. In an ironic coincidence, Pseudo-Photios fell into a similar trap while recounting the same episode. Only by unmasking these texts as forgeries can we begin to untangle the two faces of the Paulicians and understand the complexities of their legacy in the historical record.

CHAPTER 2

Reinventing Paulicians in the 10th Century

If one thing should be apparent from the labours of historians over the past few centuries, it is that the Paulicians have been a continued source of obfuscation and misunderstanding. It is somewhat comforting to know that the same situation prevailed even in their own time. Paulicians were reinvented as zealously by contemporaries as they have been by Protestants and Catholics, by Armenologists and Byzantinists. This is hardly surprising. We have already seen that both Peter of Sicily's *History of the Paulicians* and Pseudo-Photios' *Brief History of the Manichaeans* are not the products of the well-connected eyewitnesses that they claim to be. Whatever agendas these pseudonymous authors sought to advance, they evidently did, at great personal effort, through subterfuge. Elucidating these agendas and their means of dissemination are central to the aims of this chapter and, as previously hinted, the matter of punishment, which had been central to Byzantine debates about the Paulicians throughout the 9th century, plays a pivotal role. However, the solution is not as simple as might first appear because debates about punishment are closely intertwined with another phenomenon of considerable importance: the reinvention of the Paulicians in the 10th century. Understandings of the heresy were far from clear by the time our forgers laid quill to parchment; in near contemporary texts portrayals of Paulician identity are underdeveloped and inconsistent, and the reasons for the movement's rise to historical prominence are not always apparent. This situation arises for two reasons: firstly, because Paulicians were of so little interest to Byzantine writers before the historical projects associated with Constantine VII's reign that several historians seem to have been almost oblivious of them; and secondly, because the historians of Constantine's school experimented with their representation while making them increasingly central to the historical narrative of Basil I's reign. This emphasis was imperative because both triumphs of Basil, Constantine's grandfather and the founder of the dynasty, were celebrated for victories over the Paulicians. A clear account of the threat that they posed was therefore integral for the purposes of legitimating the Macedonian dynasty. Partly as a response to this historiographical project, Peter of Sicily's *History of the Paulicians* reinvented our heretics once more by synthesising their two faces: the duplicitous Manichaeans who promulgated their doctrines in secret from *c*.800–840 and the bands of marauding raiders who laid waste to the eastern provinces of the empire with their Islamic allies from the 840s to the 870s. The success of Peter's

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endeavour lies open to dispute; the account presented here suggests that contemporary readers received the *History* unfavourably, although this is perhaps linked to its contextual shortcomings and heavy-handed approach to punishment rather than its historical narrative *per se*. Yet modern scholarship has been far kinder to it: it has been the central paradigm by which the Paulicians have been understood in scholarly circles from the 17th century until the present day.

This chapter explores this reinvention of the Paulicians by examining the evolution of their portrayal in Byzantine sources of the 9th and 10th centuries, focusing particularly on the variety of labels applied to them. It then proceeds to situate our forged texts within this reinvention. The complexity of the evidence is pronounced enough to preclude a definitive reconstruction, but it seems most probable that the *History of the Paulicians* is the culmination of a concerted attempt by interested parties to enact more severe punishments against the Paulicians (and perhaps heretics more generally), which in all likelihood had its genesis before Constantine's sole reign. Every indication suggests that the composition of the *History* was prolonged and convoluted. The same is not true of the *Brief History*, which could have been produced relatively swiftly, but its enigmatic qualities render it difficult to ascertain its relationship with the *History*. Here, I have inclined toward the view that it was written in order to reassert the *History*'s message after the latter text failed to achieve its aims. This interpretation is speculative and remains open to dispute. Yet a rather more certain conclusion leaps from these pages: although many of our surviving sources insist upon the application of the death penalty to the Paulicians, this view was invariably contested. Persecution may have been enacted zealously during the upheavals of the 9th-century iconomachy, but in the less frenzied climate of the 10th century, the application of the death penalty was practically unthinkable. By investigating the reinvention of the Paulicians here, we can gain some insight into why this was the case.

1 Byzantine Understandings of Paulicians *c.*810–900

Somewhat surprisingly, given their status as one of the empire's most dangerous enemies from the 840s to the 870s, Paulicians are largely absent from Byzantine sources before the main historical works associated with Constantine VII's sole reign. Even in those instances where they do appear, the narrative focus is rarely on them until they impinge upon matters of importance to Byzantine history, such as warfare on the eastern frontier. There is no indication of a coherent understanding of Paulician history, or an explanation

of their rise to prominence; they merely appear on the historians' pages, often to vanish shortly afterwards. All of this is complicated by the fact that Paulicians are rarely termed as such in our sources. Instead, those whom we would now call Paulicians are labelled, among other appellations, Manichaeans, Paulianists, or even terms synonymous with Muslims, such as Agarenes and Ishmaelites. This clearly complicates our objectives, but the challenge is not an insurmountable one; the diverse and fluid use of ethnonyms and doctrinal signifiers in Byzantine literature is well known, particularly in archaising historical texts or religious polemics. The resultant difficulties are therefore generic within the field. That being said, the issue is more pronounced in the case of the Paulicians than in most others because our Greek sources entail such difficulties, and because of a dearth of corroborating sources in other languages during the period.

Despite these complicating factors, most scholars have not considered the diversity of names applied to the Paulicians to be a serious issue, largely because the most commonly attested term, the Manichaean one, occasions little confusion since Manichaeans were not present within the empire during our period.[1] As we have already seen, there is evidence for continuity between the two faces of the Paulicians, so it seems that, where the context is appropriate, there is little reason to question that they are being identified in the majority of cases. Still, the diversity of appellations applied to them merits closer attention than earlier scholarship has recognized and, accordingly, I shall specify the nomenclature used by our sources in what follows. The point of interest is not, however, the terminology in itself, but how coherent and consistent understandings of Paulicians are across our sources. More specifically, our main concern is whether the range of labels used represent creative or ambiguous uses of language which seek to exploit the different connotations of these identifiers, or whether Roman understandings of Paulicians were simply imprecise or confused in the 10th century. There is certainly something of the former going on here; it is hardly coincidental that the *History of the Paulicians*, which seeks to demonstrate above all that Manichaeans and Paulicians are one and the same, is the most consistent in its terminology. However, it also seems that understandings of Paulicians were evolving considerably at this time, thereby explaining why their reinvention was such a contested process. In what follows, I shall examine this reinvention in a broadly chronological way, beginning in the early 9th century, but it bears emphasising that I am

1 Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China* (Manchester, 1985), pp. 168–175.

not interested in chronology for its own sake and will not attempt a definitive reconstruction of the sources under discussion. Direct textual influence rarely explains the relationships between our sources, in my view. Instead, the underlying rationale throughout presupposes sequential, overlapping, and often lengthy compositional processes, texts reworked or redeployed for different contexts, and important witnesses now lost. The aim is to identify broader intellectual trends, rather than specific textual relationships.

The first extant Byzantine source to document the Paulicians is the *Chronographia* of Theophanes, which refers to them relatively frequently from *c.*800 until 813, when its narrative breaks off.[2] Theophanes was a contemporary to these events and habitually refers to our heretics as "Manichaeans, now called Paulicians." Like Peter of Sicily long after him, Theophanes approved of their persecution and his explicit identification of the two heresies legitimates the punishment that he espouses.[3] Beyond this, his association of the Paulicians with a readily identifiable precursor suggests that their identity would not have been self-evident to his audience, which in turn suggests that their rise to prominence at the beginning of the 9th century was sudden, as I shall argue throughout this book.[4] Theophanes remains preoccupied with the dangers that they posed in these years, such as their alleged involvement in schemes to overthrow Michael I, as well as their persecution by the same emperor.[5] Several other sources attest the centrality of punishment to understandings of Paulicians at this time. A solitary reference in the *Third Antirrhetikos* of Patriarch Nikephoros I, which was probably written *c.*818–820, describes how some iconoclasts fell in league with "Manichaeans" after the Second Council of Nikaea in 787.[6] We can be sure that Nikephoros is referring to Paulicians here, since he mentions that some were executed after doing so, which can only be a reference to the persecutions of Michael I. Nikephoros himself instigated these persecutions and his role is recounted by both Theophanes' *Chronographia* and Ignatios the Deacon's account of

2 Cyril Mango, Roger Scott, eds., *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor* (Oxford, 1997), pp. lvii; lxi–lxii. For Theophanes' reference to Constantine V's relocation of Paulicians, see Chapter 4.

3 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, ed. Carl de Boor, 2 vols, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1883), pp. 488; 495. English translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, eds. and trans. Cyril Mango, Roger Scott (Oxford, 1997), pp. 671; 678.

4 See also Claudia Ludwig, "The Paulicians and Ninth-Century Byzantine Thought," in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?*, ed. Leslie Brubaker (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 31–32.

5 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, pp. 494–496; 501. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 678–679; 684–685.

6 Nikephoros, *Third Antirrhetikos*, 68, *Patrologia Graeca* 100, col. 501.

his life, the *Vita Nicephori*. From Theophanes' testimony, we know that these persecutions were also directed against the Athinganoi and the *Vita Nicephori* adopts archaising terms for both groups, calling the Athinganoi "Phrygians" and the Paulicians once again "Manichaeans."[7] Theophanes favours capital punishment in the Paulicians' case, but the same is not true of Theodore the Stoudite, who vociferously argued against this course of action. His letter to Leo the spice dealer is the first extant source to refer to Paulicians alone, with no hint of a Manichaean identification.[8] In a later letter to Theophilos of Ephesos, Theodore does refer to Manichaeans while discussing the punishment of Paulicians, but in this instance he is clearly adopting Theophilos' own terminology.[9]

In the first two decades of the 9th century, then, the association between Manichaeans and Paulicians seems to have been adopted as a matter of course, with the possible exception of Theodore and others who opposed their punishment. The identification was intrinsically linked with the issue of persecution, which all of the sources noted above reference in some way.[10] Surprisingly, references to Paulicians during the rest of the 9th century are sparse, but there is a shift away from association with Manichaeans. The most crucial text in this regard is the *Treatise*, which is the only extant 9th-century text that is concerned solely with the heresy. Although it states that Paulicians are none other than Manichaeans at the outset, it traces the source of their beliefs to the brothers Paul and John.[11] Paradoxically, it then undermines this claim by noting that the Paulicians freely anathematise Mani and his forebears, as well as the Samosatan brothers.[12] References to Mani and his doctrines are rare elsewhere in the tract, thereby suggesting that the identification favoured by Theophanes

7 Ignatios the Deacon, *Nicephori archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica*, ed. Carl de Boor (Leipzig, 1880), p. 158, l. 25 – p. 159, l. 8. English translation: "Life of the Patriarch Nikephoros I of Constantinople," in *Byzantine Defenders of Images*, trans. Elizabeth A. Fisher, ed. Alice-Mary Talbot (Washington, D.C., 1998), p. 65.

8 Theodore the Stoudite, *Theodori Studitae epistulae*, *Ep.* 94, ed. Georgios Fatouros, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1992), pp. 214–215. For Theodore, see Roman Cholij, *Theodore the Stoudite: The Ordering of Holiness* (Oxford, 2002).

9 Theodore the Stoudite, *Theodori Studitae epistulae*, *Ep*. 455, vol. 2, pp. 644–647.

10 One exception is the *Vita Nicetae Medicii*, which does not address the punishment of the Paulicians while mentioning them in the course of an exchange between the iconophile bishop Peter of Nikaea and Leo V. It too identifies them as Manichaeans. *Vita Nicetae Medicii*, 35, in *Acta Sanctorum*, April I, pp. 253–266.

11 *Treatise*, 1, ed. and trans. Charles Astruc, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), p. 80. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 93.

12 *Treatise*, 6, p. 83. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 93.

had become suspect.[13] It is difficult to shake the suspicion of cognitive dissonance here; the Manichaean identification was originally promulgated for ideological reasons related to punishment and, although the label was quickly found to be inaccurate in practice, its rhetorical function meant that the usage died hard. As noted in the previous chapter, the *Treatise* was soon interpolated in its entirety within both recensions of George the Monk's *Chronicon*, probably during the period when the Paulicians posed the greatest threat to the empire. There is an intriguing difference between these two recensions, since whereas in the first recension the Paulicians are otherwise unmentioned, in the second recension an allusion to the iconoclast emperor Constantine V has been altered to characterise him as a Paulician.[14] Two important conclusions stem from this: firstly, the association between Constantine and the Paulicians is late; and secondly, the polemical repertoire that Byzantines used to deprecate them was expanding at this time.

The main reason that the *Treatise* occupies such a pivotal position in Byzantine understandings of the heresy is that it sits at the transition from the religious to militaristic phases of the movement. As we have already observed, it incorporates testimony from the Paulician sources and identifies their *didaskaloi* and churches, but betrays no knowledge of Karbeas and his break with the empire. All of the sources we have examined to date have also focused on the Paulicians' religious threat, but the vast majority of sources we shall encounter from the 10th century are preoccupied with their military dimension. The prospect of an insurrectionist Paulician menace must have seemed remote indeed during the final years of iconoclasm, as attested by the *Vita Macarii Peleketae*. In this text, the titular monastic converts "Paulicians, that is, Manichaeans" while imprisoned by Theophilos, thereby showing that the Manichaean identification still endured and that Paulicians were still being punished.[15] On first impressions, antipathy for them during Theophilos' reign is corroborated by another hagiographical witness, version *Γ* of the *42 Martyrs of Amorion*, which describes the activity of Kallistos, the Duke of Koloneia newly appointed by the emperor. Kallistos takes measures against "Manichaeans" in his territories, but is captured by them and handed over first to Karbeas and then to the caliph al-Wāthiq, whereupon he is eventually executed with the

13 *Treatise*, 9; 18, pp. 85; 90. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 94–95.

14 See also Chapter 4. George the Monk, 34, *Georgii Monachi chronicon*, ed. Carl de Boor, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1904), p. 751, l. 18–19 (apparatus).

15 Sabas, "S. Macarii monasterii Pelecetes hegumeni acta graeca," 14, ed. Joseph van den Gheyn, in *Analecta Bollandiana* 16 (1897), p. 159.

prisoners captured during al-Mu'taṣim's sack of Amorion in 838.[16] However, although some modern scholars have dated this source nearly contemporaneously with the events that it describes (in the mid-840s), it is most likely a 10th-century work.[17] In its most idiosyncratic moment, it already considers Karbeas an Islamic ally during Theophilos' reign, even though his flight is conventionally placed after the emperor's death. Despite these complicating factors, the text is still a valuable witness, even though the "Manichaeans" it describes have only an inconsequential role in the narrative.

References to Paulicians are notably scant after Karbeas' break with the empire. Their reception between *c*.840–880 is characterised by the copying or repurposing of earlier texts to fit this context, rather than the composition of new works. This approach is similar to the interpolations of the *Treatise* into the recensions of George the Monk's *Chronicon* mentioned above, which most probably belong to this period. It is worthwhile to pause for a moment and speculate why this might be the case. The *Chronicon* aside, few Byzantine historical works survive for the period. In the preface to his *Basileion*, Genesios claims to have been the first historian to document the reigns of the emperors from Leo V (813–820) to Michael III (843–867), thereby situating his account as the successor of Theophanes' *Chronographia*.[18] This claim should obviously not be taken at face value given the existence of George's *Chronicon*.[19] Moreover, other works containing historical source matter were certainly composed during the intervening period, such as the *Scriptor incertus de Leone Armenio* and the misleadingly named *Chronicle of 811*, even if neither of these are primarily historiographical in nature.[20] Finally, the sources common to

16 Michael, Monk and Synkellos, "De XLII martyribus Amoriensibus narrationes et carmina sacra," in *Zapiski Imperatorskoĭ akademīi nauk po Istoriko-filologicheskomu otdîelenīiu. Mémoires de l'Académie impériale des sciences de St.-Pétersbourg. Classe historico-philologique. VIIIe série* 7:2, eds. Vasily G. Vasil'evsky, Petr V. Nikitin (1905), pp. 22–36.

17 Kazhdan dates the group of texts to which our variant belongs *c*.900 and it is clear that our version is among the latest of these because its interest in the events at Amorion is peripheral. See Mary B. Cunningham, ed., *The Life of Michael the Synkellos* (Belfast, 1991), p. 37; Alexander P. Kazhdan, "Hagiographical Notes 13–16," *Byzantion* 56 (1986), p. 153.

18 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, eds. Anni Lesmüller-Werner, Hans P. Thurn, (Berlin/New York, 1978), p. 3. English translation: *Genesios. On the Reigns of the Emperors*, ed. Anthony Kaldellis (Canberra, 1998), p. 3.

19 Athanasios Markopoulos, "Genesios: A Study," in *Byzantinisches Archiv: Realia Byzantina*, eds. Giannis Mavromatis, Sofia Kotzabassi (Berlin, 2009), p. 141.

20 *Scriptor incertus: testo critico, traduzione e note*, ed. Francesca Iadevaia (Messina, 1987); "La chronique byzantine de l'an 811," ed. Ivan Dujčev, *Travaux et mémoires* 1 (1965), pp. 205–254; Leslie Brubaker, John F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era* (*ca.680–850*): *The Sources* (Aldershot, 2001), pp. 179–180.

Genesios and the Continuator show that works which can broadly be defined as historical were extant for the period *c*.870–940, although these no longer survive independently.[21] Both authors had access to earlier material documenting the Paulicians and this is also true of other sources, such as the *Vita Basilii*'s account of Basil I's campaign of 873, which is credible and meticulously detailed.

It is therefore clear that texts which addressed Paulician activity were composed during the 840s-880s. What is lacking is a brand of history writing that sought to explain and systematise events. It may be that literary production at the time was focused on other textual forms, such as hagiographical and administrative texts, or encyclopaedic projects, but it is also possible that religious dissension played its role.[22] A succession of controversies, such as the rivalry between Ignatios and Photios and the Tetragamy controversy over Leo VI's fourth marriage, characterise the reigns of Basil I and his successor.[23] This may have proved inimical to the composition and/or preservation of historical works given the importance of doctrinal fidelity in literature of the time. In fact, the function of Byzantine historical writing may provide an important clue regarding the curious silence about the Paulicians. After the final classicising historians such as Prokopios and Theophylaktos Simokatta, Byzantine historical narratives had largely taken the form of chronicles whose narrative focus privileged the empire's orthodoxy and standing within the scheme of Divine Providence. When disasters afflicted the empire during this period, they were conventionally blamed upon the sins of the Roman people or their emperors, but these travails were almost without exception inflicted by religious outsiders such as Muslims and pagan Bulgars. Painted as Neo-Manichaean dualists, the Paulicians were theoretically just as alien, but the complexities

21 Aside from the principal common source, numerous sources have been posited for the *Basileion* and *Theophanes Continuatus* books I-IV. See Lesmüller-Werner, Thurn, eds., Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, pp. xiii–xiv; Kaldellis, ed., *Genesios. On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. xxi–xxiv; J. Michael Featherstone, Juan Signes Codoñer, eds., Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur Libri I-IV*, (Boston/Berlin, 2015), pp. 10*–13*; Patricia Karlin-Hayter, "Études sur les deux histoires du règne de Michel III," *Byzantion* 41 (1971), pp. 452–496.

22 Alexander P. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature* (*850–1000*), vol. 2 (Athens, 2006), pp. 37–41; 53–90.

23 For Ignatios and Photios, see Francis Dvornik, *The Photian Schism: History and Legend* (Cambridge, 1948). The controversy was only settled in the 10th century by the *Tome of Union*. On this, see *Tome of Union*, in *Nicholas I Patriarch of Constantinople: Miscellaneous Writings*, ed. Leendert G. Westerink (Washington, D.C., 1981), pp. 56–85. For the Tetragamy, see Romilly J.H. Jenkins, Basil Laourdas, "Eight Letters of Arethas on the Fourth Marriage of Leo the Wise," *ELLHNIKA* 14 (1956), pp. 336–347.

of their relationship with the empire were such that Byzantine writers never reached a coherent understanding of their background or faith. As a result, the most logical options for contemporary historians were either to reassert the Manichaean connection more vigorously or to subsume them within the category of Muslims. As we shall see, when the Paulicians did become a locus of interest in the 10th century, historians grappled with their identity and importance for some time.

Whether the above factors were crucial or not, surviving textual production about the Paulicians *c.*840–880 does not straightforwardly relate to their activity and is instead focused on the refutation of classical Manichaeism. Significantly, by this time the Manichaean label often existed independently of the Paulician one, which is rarely attested after the *Treatise* and the *Vita Macarii Peleketae* and would occupy a similarly meagre prominence during the 10th century. Notable examples of the focus on Manichaeism include the genuine works of Photios that now comprise books II-IV of the *Contra Manichaeos*, since there are plentiful references to cosmological dualism, but no reference to quintessentially Paulician individuals or ideas.[24] The same is true of a manuscript of anti-Manichaean works dedicated to Basil I, which contains a laudatory poem that Athanasios Markopoulos has convincingly argued was composed by Photios.[25] This poem prays for Basil's victory over the "initiates and friends of Mani," and may have been written soon before the fall of Tephrikē.[26] In his preface to the *Eisagoge*, written *c.*885–886, Photios refers to the empire's final triumph over the Manichaeans, whereas he also refers to the conversion of Manichaeans in the capital in his earlier encyclical letter of 867.[27]

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24 The first two sermons are devoted primarily to a critique of cosmological dualism, which for Photios is closely intertwined with the notion that the God of the Old Testament is an evil demiurge. The *Retractatio* has a similar emphasis, but its tone is more didactic and less polemical as a result of its pastoral purpose. All of these writings focus on dualism in an abstract or philosophical sense, so they are neither specifically anti-Paulician, nor anti-Manichaean, although they do cover most of the allegations made by texts such as the *Treatise*. Somewhat oddly, the most caustic passages are directed at the Jews. See also Mauro Mormino, ed., *Fozio di Constantinopoli: Contro i Manichei* (Rome, 2019), pp. 15–19.

25 The manuscript is *Laurentianus plut.* 9.23. See Alexander A. Brinkmann, ed., *Alexandri Lycopolitani contra Manichaei opiniones disputatio* (Leipzig, 1895), pp. iii-v. Athanasios Markopoulos, "An Anonymous Laudatory Poem in Honor of Basil I," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992), pp. 227–230.

26 Markopoulos, "An Anonymous Laudatory Poem," pp. 227; 229–230.

27 Willem J. Aerts, Thomas E. van Bochove, et. al., "The Prooimion of the Eisagoge: Translation and Commentary," *Subseciva Groningana* 7 (2001), pp. 96–97; Photios, *Epistulae*, in *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, *Ep.* 2, eds. Basil Laourdas, Leendert G. Westerink, 6. vols, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1983), p. 41, l. 27–30. Note that the passage in the encyclical letter is sometimes considered an interpolation. On this, see Paul Speck,

The Manichaean identification thus seems to gain greater traction in Photian works. Once again, however, initial impressions deceive, for Photios' letters to the Paulician leader Chrysocheir never attribute a Manichaean background to his correspondent. Several of these letters comprise appeals which seek to persuade Chrysocheir, who was a Roman client at the time, to remain faithful to the empire, but Photios' increasingly despairing tone suggests the Paulician leader's eventual estrangement.[28] Those letters (*Ep*.33–38) which specifically address religious matters are not aimed against Manichaeism, but a disparate variety of theological positions encompassing Miaphysitism, Monoenergism, Monotheletism, and, most prominently of all, iconoclasm.[29] Aside from the letters devoted to iconoclasm, none of these letters are lengthy and it seems throughout that Photios is not well informed on the views of his correspondent. Whether we trust the iconoclast emphases or not, it is clear once again that Manichaeism was invoked much more freely in rhetorical contexts than practical ones. Photios' writings are our last window on Paulician activity during the 9th century and in many respects epitomize the intricacies of the literary record. To recap briefly, the Manichaean identification favoured at the outset of the century remained at the crux of contemporary discourse, despite the fact that the *Treatise* and Photios' correspondence with Chrysocheir imply its accuracy had been undermined. The portrayal of the Paulicians was more conditioned by Byzantine ideological needs than reality so, unsurprisingly, a coherent explanation of their origins and activity never seems to have been attempted. As a result, the crucial, but obscure, transition from the *didaskalos* Sergios-Tychikos to Karbeas is never acknowledged by our sources, let alone explained. The complexities of the topic only increase when we move into the 10th century, by which time Manichaean signifiers had come to be supplanted with Islamic ones.

"Die griechischen Quellen zur Bekehrung der Bulgaren und die zwei ersten Briefe des Photios," in *Polypleuros nous: Miscellanea für Peter Schreiner zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, eds. Cordula Scholz, George Makris (Munich, 2000), p. 356; Tia M. Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin Heretics: Byzantines and the Filioque in the Ninth Century* (Kalamazoo, 2008), pp. 57–65.

28 Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 57, vol. 1, p. 104; *Ep*. 80, vol. 1, p. 121; *Ep*. 134, vol. 1, pp. 176–178. On the letters more generally, see also Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 40–42.

29 Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 33–38, vol. 1, pp. 85–89. On iconoclasm, see Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 37–39, vol. 1, pp. 87–88; Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 134, vol. 1, pp. 176–178.

2 Reinventing the Paulicians in Macedonian History Writing

The preceding overview suggests that the Paulicians had attracted only sporadic interest from Byzantine writers between the composition of the *Treatise* and that of Symeon the Logothete's *Chronicon*, Genesios' *Basileion*, and the *Vita Basilii* over a century later. By this time, awareness of the conflict between Byzantines and Paulicians seems to have receded, with the result that it was customarily subordinated to the more enduring narrative of Byzantine-Islamic warfare on the eastern frontier, which was a recurring concern throughout the 10th century. Consequently, we often read of Agarenes in our sources when the wider context indicates that we would expect to find Paulicians. In some instances, the former designation seems so axiomatic that it is unclear whether some authors have any historical conception of the Paulicians whatsoever. This tendency is most pronounced in Symeon the Logothete's *Chronicon* and *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, sources which are favourable to Romanos I Lekapenos (920–944), the co-emperor who steadily usurped the prerogatives of the young Constantine VII after supplanting the latter's regents in 920. Even in other sources though, conceptions of Paulician identity shift away from the Manichaean designations of the 9th century. The most interesting text from this perspective is the *Vita Basilii*, where Islamic and Manichaean identifications coexist. Unlike the two sources noted above, it seems well informed on the Paulicians, thereby showing that ignorance of the 9th-century context cannot solely account for their association with Muslims. It may be that the *Vita*'s nomenclature represents a perception that Paulicians had adopted some Islamic customs and/or that there was a significant Muslim presence in their territories. In a complementary sense, it may reflect a rhetorical strategy to associate Paulicians with Islam in order to emphasise their alienation from the empire. Most probably, all of the above explanations are valid to some degree. Whatever the truth of the matter, a decisive shift had evidently occurred in Roman conceptions of the heresy.

Few important sources survive from the early decades of the 10th century and those that do show no interest in the Paulicians. Determining which of the mid-century histories predates the others is not an easy task, but it is possible that the source with the earliest roots is the *Chronicon* of Symeon the Logothete; a text with a particularly undeveloped understanding of the Paulicians. In contrast with most of the works we shall examine here, the *Chronicon* is favourable to Constantine VII's domineering co-emperor Romanos I, which suggests that portions of its narrative may date considerably earlier than its final codification, which its most recent editor, Staffan Wahlgren, places in either 948 or

959.[30] Curiously, the *Chronicon* never refers to Paulicians or Manichaeans in historical contexts where they are appropriate and instead terms the actors in question "Agarenes." There are two discernible reasons to account for its apparent ignorance: firstly, it could result from the form of Symeon's work, since the *Chronicon* is concise and betrays little interest in religious matters; and secondly, it may arise from the ideological standpoint of the source, since other texts critical of the Macedonian Dynasty have a similar emphasis. The *Chronicon* is a valuable source, since it is our only witness of the crucial 844 battle of Mauropotamos, which is of considerable importance while investigating Karbeas' defection, although Symeon himself never mentions Karbeas.[31] Here and elsewhere, the chronicler's attention is principally centred on Islamic-Byzantine conflict. Yet even this does not explain his belief that Basil I was campaiging against "Agarenes" when he unsuccessfully assailed Tephrikē in 871.[32] This identity is never problematised in any way and there is no indication in the preceding pages of the Paulician menace that plays such a crucial role in the narrative of Basil's reign in the *Basileion* and the *Vita Basilii*. Symeon's ignorance is puzzling and raises the possibility that a heightened understanding of Paulician activity only arose through scholars patronised by Constantine VII, who uncovered a wealth of information on the reign of Constantine's grandfather Basil I.

This impression is corroborated by the testimony of *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, which is written in the style of a chronicle and contains two recognisably different parts, the first of which relates the reigns of the emperors from Basil I to Romanos I with a distinctly anti-Macedonian emphasis and the second of which portrays the Macedonian emperors Constantine VII and his son Romanos II in a more positive light.[33] The text contains one passage that interests us here and this falls in the first, anti-Macedonian, section. While describing the death of Eustathios Argyros during the reign of Leo VI, the source offers a short excursus on his ancestor Leo Argyros and the campaigns he conducted in the vicinity of Tephrikē during the reign of Michael III. This places Leo's activities during the height of Paulician control in the area, but, despite this, the source also refers to the populace of Tephrikē as "Agarenes."[34] As in

30 Staffan Wahlgren, ed., *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae chronicon* (Berlin/New York, 2006), pp. 5*-8*.

31 Symeon the Logothete, *Chronicon*, 131:4, p. 233.

32 Symeon the Logothete, *Chronicon*, 132:7, p. 262, l. 42–43.

33 Featherstone, Signes Codoñer, eds., Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, pp. 3*–4*; 16*–19*.

34 Theophanes Continuatus VI, in *Theophanes continuatus, Ioannes Caminiata, Symeon Magister, Georgius monachus*, 27, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, 1838), p. 374, l. 11–19.

Symeon's case, there is no indication that this designation is unusual in any way. In both accounts a conception of the Paulicians as a historical phenomenon seems lacking, but it is unclear whether this results from their dating and compositional contexts (which are obscure in both sources), their form (relatively concise chronicles), or their pro-Lekapenid emphases. What is clear is that, in some sources at least, Paulician raiding had been subsumed within the overarching narrative of Islamic-Byzantine warfare several generations after their eclipse as a military power.

However, there is another trajectory of contemporary thought which suggests that the Paulicians and the wars they fought were evocative enough to endure in the contemporary memory. These are the oral traditions of the *Digenis Akritis* poems, which later crystallised into written form around the 12th century. Two principal variants are now extant: the late 13th/early 14th century Grottaferrata text and the late-15th century Escorial version.[35] Despite their late date, both variants invoke personages and events redolent of 9th-century frontier life. This is especially true of the Grottaferrata version, which alludes to a handful of characters from the Paulicians' heyday.[36] The titular hero Digenis' paternal grandfather is one Chrysovergis (Chrysocheir), whose father-in-law is in turn Ambron ('Amr al-Aqṭa'), who sired a son named Karoïs Moursis (Karbeas).[37] The relationships between these figures do not correspond with the historical actors with whom we are concerned, but it is apparent that the memory of these figures persisted and the same is also true of the frontier world they inhabited, which in *Digenis* is not divided rigidly along religious or ethnic lines.[38] The crucial questions are where and how these ideas resonated. Elizabeth Jeffreys, the most recent editor of these works, believes that the first oral accounts circulated in eastern Asia Minor and that the incorporation of Paulician and Islamic figures into the hero's family tree suggests the synthesis of Greek and Arabic traditions.[39] Such oral accounts seem to have been known to Constantinopolitan historians during our period, but were not necessarily highly regarded. In the course of the Continuator's description of Paulician activity following Karbeas' flight, he notes that "the vulgar, somehow

35 Elizabeth Jeffreys, ed., *Digenis Akritis: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. xviii–xxx.

36 In a voluminous succession of articles, Henri Grégoire argued for the historicity of many aspects of the poems, particularly regarding the Paulicians. This work was not well received and is rarely cited nowadays.

37 Jeffreys, ed., *Digenis Akritis*, pp. xxxiv–xxxv.

38 Jeffreys, ed., *Digenis Akritis*, pp. xxxv–xli.

39 Jeffreys, ed., *Digenis Akritis*, pp. xxxii.

jumbling the letters" called 'Amr al-Aqṭa' Ambron, just as in the Grottaferrata variant of *Digenis*, thereby suggesting he knew similar or related traditions.[40] It therefore seems apparent that broadly coherent understandings of the Paulicians' role in frontier warfare were current during the early and mid-10th century, but were not yet systematised in the elite preserve of historiography. It may simply be that Roman authors had no reason to document their activity until the intellectual projects of Constantine VII. Nevertheless, the existence of an enduring counternarrative to official lines is invaluable and suggests that contemporary representations of Paulicians were plural and contested.

Irrespective of how we interpret these oral traditions, a remarkable sea change in the written sources occurs in the historiographical works of Constantine VII's school, in which Paulician activity is not only recounted, but is found so compelling that it becomes increasingly central to conceptions of Basil I's reign. The reason why the Paulicians were so crucial to the historiographical strategy of Constantine's school is obvious: victory over them marked the military highpoints of Basil's reign, presenting the occasion for both of his triumphs (in 873 and 878/79), although in the first instance his gains in Paulician territory were negligible.[41] Victories on this scale were few and far between and hence a thorough account of Paulician aggression was essential in attributing to Basil the martial glory that was considered paramount for every successful Roman Emperor. This fact neatly explains the rise of the Paulicians from the historical obscurity in which they seemed to have languished under the Lekapenids. Even more crucially, Constantine seems to have held an interest in the Paulicians himself, as the anti-Miaphysite tract of Demetrios of Kyzikos attests. Specifically, the preface of Demetrios' treatise

40 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:16, pp. 236–237, l. 25–26.

41 The importance of Constantine's representation of Basil to our understanding of the Paulicians at Tephrikē is noted by Redgate. See Anne E. Redgate, "Catholicos John III's *Against the Paulicians* and the Paulicians of Tephrike," in *Armenian Sebastia/Sivas and Lesser Armenia*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Los Angeles, 2004), p. 108. The exaggerated portrayal of Basil is evident from a passage in *De thematibus* where Constantine gives his grandfather the credit for defeating both Chrysocheir and (incorrectly) Karbeas. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De thematibus. Introduzione – testo critico – commento*, 9, ed. Agostino Pertusi (Vatican City, 1952), p. 74. The 873 triumph was primarily celebrated for victories at Samosata and Melitene, since Tephrikē had resisted Basil's efforts. Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 104; Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:31; 4:35, pp. 81–82; 86. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 101–102; 106–107. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur liber quo Vita Basilii Imperatoris amplectitur*, 49, ed. and trans. Ihor Ševčenko (Berlin/Boston, 2011), pp. 174–177.

describes Constantine's refutation of Jews, Athinganoi, and Paulicians, perhaps in the context of formal debates. Gerhard Ficker, the original editor of the preface, suggested that the emperor in question was Constantine VIII (962–1028; sole reign 1025–1028), but this has not met with general approval and the identification with Constantine VII is usually preferred.[42]

> Exposition of an abridged doctrine of the Jacobites and others who falsely claim ecclesiastical and orthodox belief and descent, written by Demetrios, Metropolitan of Kyzikos, at the behest of the Christ-loving Constantine, Emperor and Porphyrogennetos, in which are also matters concerning the Chazinzarians.[43]

> Since God bestowed something extraordinary on your lofty and, more to the point, most regal nature, O benevolent master, showing favour to your rule through your expertise in all respects, he wondrously brought together in you only the purest of all things, the capacity to rule and teach, the blooming of the purple, and the power of words. As a result, you already converted many of the Jews from their ancestral error, you refuted not a few of the Athinganoi and Paulicians, and were yourself found worthy of becoming the mouth of God in accordance with the Lord's sayings …[44]

The value of Demetrios' laudatory preface cannot be underestimated since it provides the most direct link we possess between Constantine VII and the Paulicians, thereby implying we are on the right track by placing the forgery of the *History of the Paulicians* and *Brief History* in his reign. There are, however, undeniable suggestions that Demetrios' flattery of Constantine has elevated his master's proficiency to an unwarranted degree. Notably, the treatise

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42 Gerhard Ficker, ed., *Erlasse des Patriarchen von Konstantinopel Alexios Studites* (Kiel, 1911), pp. 22–23; Joshua Starr, "An Eastern Christian Sect: The Athinganoi," *Harvard Theological Review* 29:2 (1936), p. 97, n. 19. A letter of the patriarch Nicholas I Mystikos (912–925) is addressed to one Demetrios of Kyzikos, who is surely our author, *c.*920–925. On this, see Nicholas Mystikos, *Letters of Nicholas I, Patriarch of Constantinople: Greek Text and English Translation*, *Ep.* 157, ed. Romilly J.H. Jenkins, Leendert G. Westerink (Washington, D.C., 1973), pp. 478–481. See also, *Ep*. 107, pp. 390–391, with context at p. 569.

43 Demetrios' treatise tells us that the Chazinzarians are a branch of Armenian heretics who devote excessive devotion to the cross, although unlike the majority of the heretics described in the treatise, they are dyophysite 'Nestorians' rather than Miaphysites. On this, see *Patrologia Graeca* 127, col. 881–884.

44 Demetrios of Kyzikos, *De Jacobitarum hæresi et Chatzitzariorum*, preface in *Erlasse des Patriarchen*, ed. Ficker, pp. 22–23. This section of the text is found only in the manuscript *Escorial R. I.* 15.

is only a brief primer of Miaphysite ideas which covers their historical origins, their Christological position, and their sacramental and liturgical practices. It does not provide a starting point for the systematic refutation of the heresy, to which Demetrios implies that Constantine aspired. It is doubtful that Constantine had the theological acumen to engage in Christological minutiae in the manner that the preface suggests, so it should probably be interpreted as demonstrating Constantine's interest in heresy rather than his active involvement in combatting it. He may well have debated with Paulicians, Athinganoi, and Jews, but, if so, the success of his endeavours were almost certainly exaggerated by Demetrios.

While the preface implies that Constantine was interested in heterodoxy more generally, the Paulicians seem to have been the most pressing concern, as is apparent in the development of their portrayal throughout the works of his school. More precisely, it seems that the initial fulcrum of interest centred upon Chrysocheir and Tephrikē, which were of crucial importance to the understanding of Basil I's reign, and that a more cohesive understanding of Paulician activity and identity only gradually coalesced around them. An investigation into this matter logically begins with the first historical source of Constantine's circle: Genesios' *Basileion*. As most Byzantinists are aware, it is a difficult text full of Atticising language and at times torturous syntax. Even nowadays, when historians are more attentive to reading texts on their own merits and less likely to make sweeping stylistic judgements, their patience with the *Basileion* has often worn thin.[45] The intricacy of Genesios' expression must be borne in mind while assessing the periphrastic language with which he often terms the Paulicians. He is clearly aware of heresiological sources which document Paulician belief, probably including the *Treatise*, since he includes among their heretical forebears "Paul of Samosata, Koubrikos (i.e. Mani) and Montanos."[46] The last-named exhibits Genesios' fondness for elaboration and archaising, since Montanos, the originator of the New Prophecy in 2nd-century Phrygia, is an unlikely forebear of Paulician doctrine who is never mentioned as such elsewhere.[47] Despite the fact that Genesios considers Mani one of the Paulicians'

45 Kaldellis, ed., *Genesios. On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. xxiv–xxvii.

46 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:34, p. 85, l. 48–49. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. 106. Koubrikos was Mani's birth name according to polemical tradition. See Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 51–52, ed. Denise Papachryssanthou, trans. Jean Gouillard, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 24–25. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), untranslated.

47 On Montanism, see Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge, 1996).

inspirations, he is only one of several. Atypically, heretical identifications are not central to Genesios' understanding of the Paulicians. He habitually refers to them in a curiously characterless way, by describing them periphrastically as inhabitants of Tephrikē, usually with a pejorative slant.[48] This, in fact, is how he introduces them upon their first intrusion into the narrative. Their heretical forebears are only recounted during a later episode. He never uses the terms Manichaean or Paulician and, in the only instance in which he appends a collective label to the group, he considers them Paulianists.[49]

Genesios therefore downplays the Manichaean roots of the Paulicians and, interestingly, he displays a similar indifference to their Islamic links. He never refers to the crucial alliance with Melitene and instead confines his interest in the Paulicians to the leadership of Chrysocheir, which is particularly surprising because he knows of Karbeas, noting that both he and, more puzzlingly, Kallistos had led the Paulicians previously.[50] Genesios' only reference to Paulicians before Basil's reign lies in a problematic reference, repeated by the Continuator, to their involvement in the invasion of Thomas the Slav.[51] The closest he comes to positing a link between Paulicians and Muslims is when he claims that the former took advantage of the disruption caused by Roman-Islamic conflict to make their own raids, but even here the agencies of Muslims and Paulicians are clearly separated.[52] As a result, Genesios' conception of the Paulicians barely extends beyond Chrysocheir's leadership and fails to position them within the diplomatic context of Byzantine-Islamic warfare. A crucial product of this is that the victories of Basil and his subordinates are achieved against a readily identifiable enemy which is decisively defeated after the death of Chrysocheir and the fall of Tephrikē. Leader and city predominate over any broader conception of Paulician identity in both the *Basileion* and, as we shall see, the *Vita Basilii*, thereby implying that they were the starting

48 See Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:31, p. 81, l. 34–35. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. 101; Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:35, p. 85, l. 47–48. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. 106.

49 Note that although Kaldellis gives the translation "Paulicians" this is not the reading in the manuscript. Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:37, p. 88. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 109–110.

50 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:35, p. 86. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. 107. The reference to Kallistos perhaps results from a confused reading of variant *Γ* of the *42 Martyrs of Amorion*, in which Kallistos is an opponent of the Paulicians.

51 For a thorough discussion, see Chapter 5. Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 2:2, p. 24, l. 17–21. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 29–30; Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 2:12, pp. 82–83.

52 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:31, pp. 81–82. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 101–102.

points for interest in the Paulicians during Constantine's reign, for the reason that they were integral to extolling the military successes of Basil I.

That this is so is abundantly clear from the fate of both in the *Basileion*'s narrative, which conflates the demise of Chrysocheir and Tephrikē into a single episode, with the latter recounted first despite the fact that it occurred six or seven years after the former.[53] In an account which has similar religious overtones to the *Vita Basilii*, Basil beseeches the archangels that he might not expire before taking Tephrikē, which is then obliterated by a storm. As for Chrysocheir, his death is related in an account which is practically identical to that of the *Vita Basilii*, with only a few differences of emphasis evident. Genesios' account of these victories enjoys a privileged place in his narrative, insofar as it appears just before the culmination of his work, which comprises an account of Basil's character, his benefactions, and the hunting prowess which eventually contributed to his death.[54] It is thus evident that campaigns against the Paulicians were crucial to understandings of Basil's reign in the *Basileion*, but this emphasis had not yet reached the eulogistic heights attained in the *Vita Basilii*, since the *Basileion* barely portrays Basil more favourably than his predecessors. Notably, he occupies a passive role in the conflicts with the Paulicians; most of the fighting is done by his subordinates. It is conceivable that Genesios' attempts to praise Basil may be due to a later revision of the text, as is suggested by the marked similarity of Genesios' narrative to that of the *Vita Basilii*.[55] However, it is difficult to determine this because it is unclear whether either text is borrowing from the other, or alternatively if they share a common source. All things considered, the legitimation of Basil I had not yet reached its full development in the *Basileion*, but, despite this, his victories over the Paulicians occupy a prominent position within Genesios' narrative.

Unsurprisingly, the *Vita Basilii* gives a much more laudatory account of Basil's reign and, although the episodes which refer to Paulician activity are similar to those recounted in the *Basileion*, the ends to which they are put are rather different. Whereas Basil's role is passive in Genesios' narrative, in the *Vita* he takes the field himself, most notably during the life's extensive and detailed account of his campaign of 873 through Paulician and Islamic territory, which is so geographically precise that it suggests the use of first-hand

53 Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 96–108.

54 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:36–42, pp. 86–91. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 108–113.

55 Compare Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:36–37, pp. 86–88. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 108–110 with Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 41–43, pp. 149–159.

sources.[56] The *Vita* notes Basil's triumph following this campaign and, in this episode and elsewhere, it places Paulicians and Muslims into a more cohesive picture of warfare on the eastern frontier, although it never explicitly alludes to an alliance between them. As well as expanding upon Basil's military role, the *Vita* also sheds further light on why the Paulician wars were so important to a eulogistic portrayal of his reign. For the most part, his wars are fought by his generals and in places the *Vita* implies that some considered Basil an inactive and unwarlike leader.[57] His victories over the Paulicians were key in countering this criticism, thereby explaining the importance they had in Constantine VII's understandings of his grandfather's reign.

As for its portrayal of the Paulicians, the *Vita* picks up from the *Basileion* by introducing and concluding its account by invoking Chrysocheir and Tephrikē, rather than a collective term of belonging.[58] In other places, the *Vita* melds the two most commonly espoused identifications of the Paulicians, implying that they are "Ishmaelites" in some instances, while calling them "Manichaeans" in others. They are occasionally termed "barbarians," but never "Paulicians."[59] By all indications, the source's ambiguous nomenclature attempts to convey a variegated social fabric along the Anti-Taurus Mountains, since the territories traversed by the 873 campaign comprised a smorgasbord of ethnic and confessional identities. On the whole, the *Vita*'s portrayal of the Paulicians is more detailed and sophisticated than the *Basileion*. It is especially noteworthy for placing the wars against Paulicians and Muslims into a more cohesive narrative, but, crucially, it never refers to an alliance between them, or explains why the Paulicians became such a dangerous enemy to the empire in the first place. It, like the *Basileion*, sees the threat to the empire in terms of Chrysocheir and Tephrikē, with little indication of what came beforehand.

This ambiguity is resolved by the final major historical work of Constantine VII's reign: *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV. This text was probably conceived independently of the *Vita Basilii*, but, despite this, the fact that it does not recount Basil's reign means that the two accounts were perhaps intended be read alongside one another.[60] The Continuator's references to Paulicians are confined to two distinct episodes, the first of which is central to our understanding of the

56 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 37–40, pp. 136–149.

57 This is suggested by some revealing slips in the *Vita Basilii*. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 39; 46, pp. 142–143; 162–165.

58 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 37; 43, pp. 136–137; 158–159.

59 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 38; 42, pp. 141–142; 150–151.

60 Warren T. Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 165–180; 188–196; Ševčenko, ed., Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, p. 9*.

Islamic-Paulician alliance. In the scope of this dense but convincing account, which condenses over a decade of Paulician and Muslim activity into a page and a half of Greek text, the Continuator recounts Theodora's persecution, the resultant flight of Karbeas, and the beginnings of the alliance with the Emirate of Melitene, followed by the settlement of Argaous and Amara, the joint raids of Karbeas and 'Amr al-Aqṭa' against Byzantine territory, and finally the foundation of Tephrikē.[61] This constitutes a thorough explanation of the beginnings of Paulician militarism which contextualises the accounts of the *Basileion* and *Vita Basilii*. The passage itself is of paramount importance, but its introduction conveys two points of significance which require further attention here:

> The empress rejoiced in this, and as if desiring to set up a greater trophy, she made an attempt also on the Paulicians in the east, either to convert them to piety, as she wished, or else to do away with and wipe them out from mankind; and this brought many evils upon our land.[62]

The first of these points is prosaic but crucial: with the possible exception of the preface to Demetrios of Kyzikos' anti-Miaphysite treatise, which has not been precisely dated, this is the first extant Greek source to refer to the Paulicians by this name since the *Treatise* and the *Vita Macarii Peleketae* a century earlier. In fact, it invokes the label on three occasions, although all of these occur within the space of this one episode. Despite doing so, it nowhere associates them with Manichaeans, although the passage noted above marks them out as heretics, and, in the only other instance that it refers to Paulician affairs, it depicts Karbeas as a debauched and unscrupulous character.[63] In contrast to the *Vita Basilii*, the Continuator's narrative distinguishes clearly between Muslims and Paulicians and explains why they came to ally with one another. Regardless of the circumstances of their composition, the two accounts complement one another by reciting the rise and fall of the Paulician insurrection.

The second point, which is paramount to the concerns of this chapter, lies in the Continuator's judgement that Theodora's actions were counterproductive. This judgement stands in marked contrast to the attitude of Peter of Sicily and may partially explain why Peter reimagined the Paulician flight to Melitene,

61 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:16, pp. 236–239.

62 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:16, pp. 236–237.

63 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:23, pp. 252–253.

but the view itself is unusual enough to merit attention. The episode is in some regards emblematic of the purposes of *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV, in that by blaming the Paulician threat against the empire on the Amorian dynasty, in this instance represented by Theodora, the elimination of this threat by Basil serves to right the wrongs of his predecessors. This legitimates Basil in a similar way to the blackening of the name of Michael III which is evident throughout the text.[64] However, the sentiment that persecution of the Paulicians was detrimental to Roman interests can only have been articulated in this way long after the threat they posed had passed. It is easiest to see this retroactive appraisal originating from the Continuator himself and, if so, this corroborates the impression that the moderate attitudes to punishment articulated in the *Letter of Theophylaktos Lekapenos* predominated after the memory of the Paulicians' raids had receded.

Thus far, we have seen that the Paulicians became an increasingly important concern for historians as a result of Constantine VII's efforts to formalise a narrative legitimating the Macedonian dynasty. Perhaps unsurprisingly, other sources suggest an increase in Paulician activity at just this time. There are obvious difficulties of distinguishing cause and effect here: it may be that the interest of our historical sources in Paulicians at this time is motivated by an increase in their activity, which is inherently plausible given the steady expansion of Roman power eastward in the 10th century; or, alternatively, the awareness of Paulicians among historians and court circles could mean that Byzantines were aware of their agency and increasingly liable to see it wherever possible. In all probability, we are dealing with a combination of the two. As noted already, the *Letter of Theophylaktos Lekapenos* identifies Paulicians in Bulgaria soon after our forged heresiological texts were composed, although the fact that many characteristics of the heretics in question depart from Paulician norms have suggested a case of mistaken identity to many. Still, it took several prior letters and a great deal of effort to make this identification, so Byzantines were not looking for Paulicians wherever they might find them.

The most interesting aspect of this upturn in Paulician activity is that it documents a contemporary method of dealing with them that is never mentioned in our heresiological sources, namely relocation. The most notable example of this, which pertains to Bulgaria, is the relocation of Paulicians to Philippopolis by John I Tzimiskes at the request of Theodore II, the Melkite Patriarch of

64 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:18–21, pp. 240–247; 4:35–41, pp. 280–295.

Antioch.[65] An analogous episode, albeit one that entails difficulties of contextualisation, lies within the *Vita Pauli Iunioris*, in which the eponymous Paul (912–955) also deals with the problem posed by nefarious "Manichaeans" in "Kibyrrhaeotis and Miletus," by writing to the (unnamed) emperor and asking him to relocate them.[66] Although the event itself dates to the 10th century, the life was composed in the mid-11th century and the reference to Paulicians may more logically pertain to that period.[67] Beyond demonstrating the validity of relocation as a means of combating heresy at this time, these two latter examples are notable for showing that it was acceptable to write to the emperor in order to persuade him to take action against heresy. Crucially, however, there is no indication in either of these cases that Theodore or Paul recommended a course of punishment. Doing so may well have risked appearing presumptuous by encroaching upon imperial prerogatives, particularly if a more stringent punishment were advocated. This may well explain the ingenuity with which Peter of Sicily (and maybe also Pseudo-Photios) used to advance their agendas.

Hence, by the middle of the 10th century, that is, when we argued that the *History of the Paulicians* and *Brief History* were forged, textual representations of Paulicians in Greek historical sources were not consistent. In the early 9th century, the association of Paulicians with Manichaeans was widely espoused and this emphasis proved enduring even as its accuracy came into question. It was still invoked during the 10th century, but by this time the Paulicians were also frequently conflated with Islam as a result of their role in frontier warfare. Interest in the Paulicians increased markedly through the writings of Constantine VII's school since a coherent narrative of their military activity

65 John Skylitzes, *Ioannis Scylitzae synopsis historiarum*, 3, ed. Hans P. Thurn (Berlin/New York, 1973), p. 286. English translation: *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811–1057*, ed. and trans. John Wortley (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 273–274; John Zonaras, *Ioannis Zonarae epitome historiarum*, 17:1, ed. Ludwig A. Dindorf, 5 vols, vol. 4 (Leipzig, 1871), pp. 92–93.

66 *Vita Pauli Iunioris*, 45, ed. Iacobo Sirmondi, *Analecta Bollandiana* 11 (1892), p. 156.

67 The source has attracted little attention. Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era* (*ca.680–850*): *The Sources*, p. 223. See also Marie-France Auzépy, *L'Hagiographie et l'Iconoclasme Byzantin: le cas de la Vie d'Etienne le jeune* (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 192–193; Ihor Ševčenko, "The Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period," in *Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, eds. Anthony Bryer, Judith Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), p. 114. Another 11th century source, the *Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion*, also refers to the conversion of Paulicians. See Gregory the Monk, *Vita Lazari in monte Galesio*, 10; 115, in *Acta Sanctorum*, November III, pp. 512; 543. English translation: *Vita S. Lazari auctore Gregorio monacho. The Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion: An Eleventh-Century Pillar Saint*, ed. and trans. Richard P.H. Greenfield (Washington, D.C., 2000), pp. 86–88; 205.

was necessary in order to represent Basil – and by implication the Macedonian dynasty more widely – as militarily capable. This concern is evident to some degree in Genesios' *Basileion* and to a greater extent in the *Vita Basilii* and *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV. These works did not provide an encompassing account of Paulician activity, but rather referred to them in the course of isolated episodes which were generally connected with warfare on the eastern frontier. Despite this, a broadly coherent account of the Paulician insurrection is apparent when these works are read together. The same cannot be said for the rise of the Paulicians during the early 9th century, which is undocumented in our sources, despite the fact that both Genesios and the Continuator recount events as distant as the reign of Leo V. An important consequence of this is that there was no explanation of the relationship between, on the one hand, the *didaskaloi* of the *Treatise* and the persecutions documented by Theophanes and, on the other, the militaristic threat posed by the Paulicians during the reigns of Michael III and Basil I. It is this gap that Peter of Sicily sought to bridge while writing the *History of the Paulicians*. In the process, he emphasised the religious threat that the Paulicians posed in order to persuade Constantine's court to enact the death penalty against them.

3 Reinventing through Forgery I: The *History of the Paulicians*

Throughout this and the preceding chapter I have interpreted sources as products of sometimes lengthy compositional processes, which might encompass a number of revisions to fit a new context or patronage. Part of the reason for doing so is that there are few texts as conducive to such a reading as our most important source: Peter of Sicily's *History of the Paulicians*. Although its aims initially seem straightforward, several observations suggest the text had a prolonged inception. Although I prefer the theory that it was codified in something like its extant form during Constantine VII's sole reign, it seems likely that the concerns that animate it had been circulating for some time beforehand. It is, for instance, possible that attempts to render the Paulicians subject to the death penalty were advanced in the reigns of earlier emperors, but were received unfavourably, with the result that more indirect methods were used when the goal was reprised in Constantine's reign. Although the *History*'s author was most probably an ecclesiastic or monastic, it does not follow that the lines of dispute were drawn rigidly between the religious and secular arms, perhaps hinting that disagreements were not solely confined to the prosecution of heresy. Since this issue would have intersected with many other aspects of religious policy during the 10th century, the *History* could potentially reflect

a deep-seated frustration with aspects of ecclesiastical governance. At the very least, several of its oddities imply that the contexts which engendered it were contentious and multifaceted.

One complicating factor is immediately obvious: the fact that the *History* is a forgery. As Theodore of Antioch's request to John Tzimiskes demonstrates, it was perfectly acceptable for Byzantines to appeal to their emperor in order to address the problem of heresy. The fact that the same method is espoused in the historically more doubtful request of Paul the Younger further testifies to this. If a direct appeal to the emperor was possible, why would forgers employ such a tremendous amount of effort and ingenuity to make their point? As hinted above, the answer surely resides in the fact that the *History* recommends a specific course of punishment and this punishment is far harsher than contemporary norms. The actions of John Tzimiskes, the advice of the *cartophylax* John to Peter of Bulgaria, and the judgement of the Continuator on Theodora's persecutions suggest that the *History*'s viewpoint would be considered extreme in the second half of the 10th century. An analogous example, albeit a later one, suggests that directly appealing for capital punishment would be considered presumptuous and inexpedient.

The text in question is the *Contra Patarenos* of the Pisan theologian Hugo Etheriano, one of the most prominent theological advisers of Manuel I (1143–1180). The treatise, which was dedicated to Manuel, was probably composed after 1166.[68] Like the *History*, the *Contra Patarenos* insists that the Patarenes merit the death penalty, but, significantly, Hugo goes to some lengths to shield the patrons who asked him to write this work from appearing to have aspirations beyond their station. He never explicitly identifies them, only noting that they were "certain men of rank and influence, whose intelligence is active and whose wide-ranging experience knows no bounds."[69] As Hugo presents it, their wish to have Manuel impose the death penalty upon the Patarenes is in accordance with earlier imperial enactments which are not currently in force. Hugo's references to imperial precedent are presumably conditioned by the fact that he thought that Manuel would find this convincing, but there is a deliberate ambiguity in the introductory passages of his work which suggests a reluctance to encroach upon the imperial prerogative of determining appropriate punishments. A more direct approach was impudent, thereby explaining Hugo's vague description of his patrons.

68 Bernard Hamilton, ed., *Hugh Eteriano: Contra Patarenos*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton, Sarah Hamilton, (Leiden, 2004), p. 9.

69 Hugo Eteriano, *Contra Patarenos*, pp. 155, 177.

We must suspect that concerns such as these may underlie the indirect route by which the *History* appeals to the court of Constantine VII, but they cannot wholly account for such an exceptional text. It seems far-fetched to propose that forgery was so commonplace during this period that it was the intuitive choice by which to influence policy. As a result, it seems highly probable that concerned parties had tried to advance the *History*'s agenda more directly beforehand, perhaps even for a previous emperor. An important precondition for the composition of the *History* needs to be borne in mind: the rediscovery of the Paulician sources which inform it. There is no suggestion that any of the 10th-century histories described above had access to these, but Peter of Sicily makes sophisticated use of them, thereby suggesting that he had consulted them for some time.[70] In order to compose the *History*, Peter of Sicily not only needed access to these sources, he also had to repurpose them so that they could support his polemical ends and then place this material within an encompassing doctrinal and historical narrative in order to form a coherent polemical argument. This task would be difficult enough in itself, but becomes yet more complex when the text is conceived as a forgery, since then it is necessary to substantiate a plausible and convincing context for the work and its manuscript tradition. As if that were not enough, this process of composition seems to have run in parallel with the deepening understanding of Paulician history brought about by the composition and publication of texts such as the *Basileion*, *Vita Basilii*, and *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV, as well as the research which informed them.

It seems advisable to disassociate these processes and speculate that the *History* was conceived and probably reworked over an extended period. It presumably only took on a form recognisable with our extant text after failed attempts to advance its primary goal by other means. This goal had been espoused often enough previously. Paulicians were considered worthy of the death penalty in the reigns of Michael I and Leo V, as well as the regency of Theodora. There are unsurprising indications that the same view was espoused during the Paulicians' military ascendancy during the second half of the 9th century. As we shall see, the genuine sermons of Photios which follow the *Brief History* certainly suggest this. It is hardly strange that the same sentiment was espoused in the mid-10th century, particularly because the underlying rationale – that Paulicians were Manichaeans – fit within a preexisting legal framework. Quite probably, concerned parties had attempted to express sentiments of this kind beforehand, but had failed in their attempts. Most of

70 On this, see the appendices.

our 10th-century evidence simply suggests that Byzantines thought that more conciliatory options constituted the best way of dealing with the Paulicians. It is unclear whether these previous efforts had taken place during Constantine VII's reign, but I am inclined to think they had not, both for chronological reasons and because Constantine's court would have been more attentive to forgery if similar sentiments had been espoused recently. For this reason, it seems most appropriate to disassociate earlier attempts to impose a hard-line religious policy from his sole reign and posit that they originated some time earlier, most probably during the ascendancy of Romanos I Lekapenos. A more direct approach was probably employed, but was largely unsuccessful, if we use the context of the *History* as an indicator. It is unclear whether earlier attempts used something like the *History*, but our extant version of the text does offer some clues as to why some contemporaries were so preoccupied with the Paulicians.

Most presciently of all, the *History* conceives of them in a completely different way to historical works of the 10th century, which, as we have already seen, betray no knowledge of Paulicians in the early 9th century and pay little attention to the doctrines attributed to them in the Greek heresiological tradition. From the perspective of those familiar with the claims of texts such as the *Treatise*, it hardly seems outlandish to say that historians such as Genesios and the Continuator fundamentally misunderstood the Paulicians and the threat that they posed, since they never addressed their origins or beliefs. In order to redress this balance, it was necessary to circulate a text which outlined the Paulician religious threat and explained its relationship to the Paulicians who menaced the empire in the mid- and late 9th century. The *History* does precisely this. While articulating this aim, it also addresses the principal point of ambiguity found in the historical sources. Contemporary historians may have labelled Paulicians as Manichaeans, Ishmaelites, Agarenes, or inhabitants of Tephrikē, but Peter of Sicily's terminology is clear and unambiguous throughout: Manichaeans and Paulicians are one and the same. Taken together, these observations suggest that the *History* contests the portrayal of Paulician activity found in contemporary historical sources. The interpretations of both parties are, for the most part, indicative of different authors with different aims approaching the same topic from fundamentally different angles, rather than common sources and the textual dependence of one party upon another. The *History*'s reworking of *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV is an outlier in this regard and merits further scrutiny here.

One of the most attractive reasons for supposing that the *History* had a long genesis is that doing so makes its borrowing from *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV less central to our understanding of the text. Besides the one passage

examined in the previous chapter (the account of Theodora's persecution of the Paulicians), there is scant indication that Peter of Sicily has used this text elsewhere. In the passage in question, Peter not only reappropriates the narrative event itself, but also the value judgement that the Continuator attributes to it, since, as we saw above, the latter considered Theodora's actions to be misguided and counterproductive, whereas for Peter the episode is only the latest in a series of events which demonstrate the danger which the Paulicians posed. Since *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV is the last historical production of Constantine's circle, it is possible, although not necessary, that Peter's borrowing from this work stems from a late revision of the *History* resulting from the recent publication of the Continuator's work, rather than an integral part of its narrative. This is especially so if its composition was a prolonged affair. It is difficult to reach a conclusion either way, however. If the *History*'s borrowing from *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV is the result of a late emendation to the text, it certainly took place prior to its initial dissemination because it is integral to the core meaning, unlike the later reframing of the work as a letter to the head of the Bulgarian Church. Without an explanation of the flight to Melitene, the significance of the Paulician threat would not be apparent, and the career of the *didaskalos* Sergios would not be brought to its conclusion. Yet from this point onward the *History*'s narrative is abbreviated and unconvincing, which perhaps explains a hurried attempt at revision.

From all of the above, it should be evident that the *History* is a complex and often ingenious work. But for contemporaries it was not necessarily a convincing one. Several considerations suggest that its reliability was doubted at the time of its composition. Most notably, there is no indication that the *Letter of Theophylaktos* employs it, even though the letter must have been composed within a decade or so of the *History*'s dissemination. Furthermore, as we shall see, its metaphrasis, the *Brief History*, addresses many of its textual ambiguities and deficiencies, thereby implying that its errors were noticed by contemporaries. While Pseudo-Photios' work is well attested in manuscript traditions and is used as a source by later heresiologists, the *History*'s influence is inconsequential.[71] Finally, the approach to punishment it espouses differs

71 The attribution of one manuscript (*Parisinus graecus* 852) of the *Treatise* to a Peter Hegoumenos potentially testifies to the influence of the *History*. See *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 70–71. Similarly, *Abjuration Formula I* demonstrates a debt to the *History,* notably in that it refers to Leo III as "the Isaurian" while describing the allegorising tactics of Gegnesios-Timothy, but it may also be informed by the *Brief History*. See *Abjuration Formula I*, ed. and trans. Jean Gouillard, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 190–195, especially n. 36. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 104.

markedly from the methods that Romans advocated and employed in the following decades. It is therefore readily apparent that the authority, although not necessarily the authenticity, of the *History* was questioned upon its dissemination. Determining why this was the case is much less straightforward. Modern critics have found fault with the *History*'s stylistic inconsistencies, its faulty knowledge of its purported context, and the draconian punishments that it advocates. The last of these points differs from the views commonly espoused by contemporaries, so it may have proved the primary bone of contention. As the *Brief History* jettisons both the context and rhetorical excesses of the *History*, these may well have aroused suspicion too. Ultimately, though, it remains difficult to assess why it did not command the credibility the *Brief History* came to enjoy.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the *History* is a sophisticated compilatory text whose familiarity with Paulician sources and revision of contemporary understandings of Paulician identity imply a deep engagement with the subject, which in turn implies a text with a lengthy and complex genesis. Although its extant form most probably dates to the sole reign of Constantine VII, the concerns which animate it had evidently circulated beforehand. More than any other text, it influenced how the 10th-century reinvention of the Paulicians was received by posterity. Unlike the authors who preceded him, Peter of Sicily placed the Paulicians at the centre of his narrative – and this narrative was rabidly polemical. His account differed from his predecessors in its historical specifics, but it was the ends to which he put these which were truly radical. Texts such as the *Basileion*, the *Vita Basilii*, and *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV may have considered the Paulicians to be enemies of the empire, but they also acknowledged that reconciliation was possible, whether this lay in the remarks of the *Basileion* and *Vita Basilii* that Diakonitzes led a Paulician contingent in the Byzantine army soon after the death of Chrysocheir, or in the Continuator's surprising admission that it would have been better if Theodora had never persecuted the Paulicians at all. Peter, on the other hand, placed the Paulicians firmly beyond the pale by insisting upon the preeminence of their religious threat, which had long predated their appearance as a military power and remained as relevant as ever. Whereas other writers recognized that Paulicians could be welcomed back within the fold, he remained unflinching: they merited only death. Given its outright departure from all that went before it, we must surely suspect that the *History* proved provocative, although not, I think, convincing or authoritative, when it began to circulate. It is not surprising that it occasioned a response, but we might not expect one quite as enigmatic as the *Brief History*.

4 Reinventing through Forgery II: The *Brief History*

The aims of the *Brief History* are so obscure that it is difficult to ascertain how it stands in relation to the *History*. Since it too is a forgery, it would initially seem likely that it was intended either to support or subvert the *History*'s aims, but neither position is easy to substantiate. Its later reception suggests that it eventually served to subvert it, since the *Brief History* is used faithfully by John the *cartophylax* when he advocates a clement approach to punishing heretics on behalf of Theophylaktos Lekapenos, yet it is far from clear whether this was the intention of those responsible. If Pseudo-Photios were so intent on censuring the death penalty, why is his text silent on the issue of punishment, which only appears in two isolated passages within the genuinely Photian sermons which follow the text? Another sizable obstacle to the theory also presents itself: if the *Brief History* were intended to contest the draconian punishment of the *History*, why go to the lengths of penning a forgery when alternative means of undercutting the *History*'s authority were available? It would surely be more intuitive to point out its deficiencies in a less roundabout way. In the end, the difficulty of substantiating the *Brief History*'s stance on punishment suggests a cleaner solution to this conundrum: concerns about punishment were not as central to the *Brief History*'s meaning as we might initially think. I remarked in the previous chapter that Pseudo-Photios' work was something of a metaphrastic iceberg, in that perhaps ten percent of its meaning was conveyed by the text, while the remaining ninety percent lay in the religio-political context in which it was forged and situated. Since that context is now lost, it is unsurprising that we are unable to securely situate the text. It is ambiguous by design.

The observations presented thus far perhaps point the way forward. As we have seen, many 10th-century texts differed in their means of labelling, demarcating, and systematising Paulician activity. The *History*'s primary difference from these lay in the fact that it considered the religious threat that they posed far more significant than the militaristic one. In expressing this line of argument, it provided the first comprehensive account of Paulician activity within Romanía. It is possible that the *Brief History* aspired to the same objective while divesting itself of the *History*'s polemical excesses. If the same, or a closely related, group of forgers were indeed responsible for both texts, it may be that these forgers sought to reiterate the narrative of the *History*'s account when its contemporary reception did not align with their interests. This is the position that I shall adopt here, but it is just one of many possible reconstructions and I have no wish to insist upon it. The point of true significance is the sheer complexity of the relationship between our texts, which once more

attests the ingenuity and contention which informed Byzantine conceptions of Paulicians in the 10th century.

We have seen that the *History of the Paulicians* has a clear aim and audience. The same is not true of the *Brief History*, which is silent on the crucial themes that the *History* develops, such as imperial authority or capital punishment. Despite this, the form and content of both texts implies that the *Brief History* was intended to corroborate the *History*. The principal narrative threads of both texts are identical, since Pseudo-Photios too argues that the Paulicians are Manichaeans.[72] The *History* uses this narrative to substantiate its endorsement of the death penalty and thus it follows that, if the sources are read together, the *Brief History* supports the *History*'s rationale that capital punishment is appropriate for the Paulicians, even if it does not discuss this itself. We cannot, however, be certain that the two sources were intended to be read together in their original contexts. The form of Pseudo-Photios' work sheds little light on this conundrum. Metaphrasis, a typical 10th-century literary device particularly common in hagiography, involves the rewriting of a text in a higher register so that it would be more amenable to contemporary tastes. In this instance, the method constitutes omitting large sections of the original text and suppressing its authorial voice. Implicit in metaphrasis is the idea of superseding the source text, which suggests that our two texts would not have been intended to be read together.[73] However, this assumption is contradicted by the fact that in our example intertextual references *do* link the two texts.[74] At every turn, the *Brief History* eludes an obvious interpretation.

That being said, since it aspires to a greater authority than the *History*, it is unsurprising to see that it addresses some of the latter text's deficiencies. It jettisons the most idiosyncratic aspects of the *History*'s narrative, including the context of a prisoner exchange which Peter of Sicily used to frame his work. The *History*'s eulogisation of Basil I and its insistent advocacy of the death penalty are also discarded. In a similar vein, the *Brief History* corrects some ambiguities and factual errors. It correctly gives the birthplace of Leo III as Germanikeia in Syria, rather than stating he is an Isaurian like the *History*. Like the *History*, it mystifyingly fails to assail Leo's iconoclasm, but it at least

72 Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 1–2, ed. Wanda Conus-Wolska, trans. Joseph Paramelle, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 120–131.

73 Daria D. Resh, "Toward a Byzantine Definition of Metaphrasis," *Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies* 55 (2015), p. 787.

74 Note the observations on number symbolism made in Appendix 1.

downplays his theological competence.[75] Whereas the *History* is grammatically unclear about whether the Paul from whom the Paulicians take their name is Paul, son of Kallinike, or Paul the Armenian, the *Brief History* resolves this by giving three possibilities. At the beginning of its account, it states that the Paulicians either take their name from Paul, son of Kallinike, alone, or from both him and his brother John, whereas while discussing Paul the Armenian it also states that some think that the Paulicians take their name from him.[76] Hence, it explicates and resolves the deficiencies of the *History*. The *History*'s primary problem seems to have been the authority it conveyed and, significantly, the *Brief History* goes some lengths to address this even if many of its scholarly pretentions are only illusory. It may refer to more anti-Manichaean works than the *History*, including the writings of Titos of Bostra, Serapion of Thmuis, Alexander of Lykopolis, and Herakleianos of Chalcedon, but there is no indication that these were ever used in the work.[77] In a similar vein, there is no indication that Pseudo-Photios participated in the reinterpretation of the Paulicians so beloved of authors of his era. All indications suggest that he only consulted the *History* and the *Treatise*, yet his erudition is superficially impressive. This is further accentuated by the text's attribution and style. Whether it was originally credited to Photios or Metrophanes of Smyrna, its supposed authorship would have commanded more gravitas than the shadowy Peter of Sicily.

When all is said and done, however, we must read the *Brief History* with attention to the same axis around which the *History* and *Letter of Theophylaktos* revolve: the matter of punishment. As noted several times already, the *Brief History* does not address this issue whatsoever, but the second and third of the three genuinely Photian works which follow it do. These texts merit a short introduction here. The first is a sermon which refutes dualism by employing philosophical and scriptural approaches. Like many sermons, its audience is complex, in that it serves as a warning to orthodox listeners as well as a corrective to heretics. As a result, its language is often combative.[78] This is even

75 Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 74, pp. 146–147. Stephen Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III: With Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources* (Louvain, 1973), pp. 25–32.

76 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 112, pp. 46–47. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 80; Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 4; 72, pp. 120–121; 144–145. See also Hamilton, Hamilton, eds., *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 80, n. 42.

77 Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 37, pp. 130–131; See also Henri Grégoire, "Les sources de l'histoire des Pauliciens. Pierre de Sicile est authentique et 'Photius' un faux," *Académie Royale de Belgique, Bulletin Classe des Lettres, 5e série* 22 (1936), p. 112.

78 Photios, *Contra Manichaeos* II-IV, 3, *Patrologia Graeca* 102, col. 85–122.

more evident in the second sermon, which addresses the rejection of the Old Testament using scriptural witnesses from the Old and New Testaments. Its final section is of crucial importance here since it is the sole developed discussion of punishment in the sermon.[79] Like the *History*, it is concerned with capital punishment and it too implies that the death penalty is appropriate, although Photios does invoke the possibility of repentance. His discussion centres upon Luke 19:27, which is also true of the last book of the *Contra Manichaeos*, perhaps implying that this quotation was central to ideas of punishment when Photios was writing.[80] The third work, otherwise known as the *Retractatio*, is rather different in form from those that precede it.[81] It provides a refutation of the heresy of two principles, often intertwined with expositions of orthodox doctrine, to an individual who is variously identified as Antonios of Kyzikos or Arsenios of Hiera in response a prior request. Accordingly, it is rather more sympathetic in tone than the sermons which precede it.[82] Like the second sermon, the *Retractatio* implies that the death penalty does apply to the Paulicians, but, again, its exhortations to contrition imply that Photios only thought this appropriate in the case of the most unrepentant heretics.

Let us now examine the relevant sections of these sermons, beginning with the passage from the second sermon. It bears reiterating that concerns with punishment are far from central to their content. The following are merely the most relevant passages:

> What punishment does the just judge demand for apostates? It is better to hear that decree itself: it says "My enemies, those who do not wish me to rule over them, bring them and slaughter them before me."[83] Since they disregarded the creator with their own eyes and instead looked away

79 Photios, *Contra Manichaeos* II-IV, 4, *Patrologia Graeca* 102, col. 121–178.

80 Peter of Sicily invokes the same quote in regard to the imperial prosecution of heresy. Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 87, pp. 38–39. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 75.

81 Photios, *Contra Manichaeos* II-IV, 4, *Patrologia Graeca* 102, col. 177–264. Convincing arguments suggest that the work dates to Photios' second exile (877–893). Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 45–46; Mormino, ed., *Fozio di Constantinopoli*, p. 19.

82 Antonios is named as the recipient in *Palatinus graecus* 216 (which attributes the text to Metrophanes of Smyrna). He was a partisan of Ignatios and therefore aligned with Metrophanes. See *Travaux et mémoires* 4, pp. 180–181; Basil Laourdas, "Τὰ εἰς τὰ <<Ἀμφιλόχια>> τοῦ Φωτίου σχόλια τοῦ κώδικος 449 τῆς Λαύρας," *ELLHNIKA* 12 (1953), pp. 271–272; Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 53; 63. Arsenios, who has been identified as a close acquaintance of Photios, is now conventionally interpreted as the correct addressee. Dvornik, *Photian Schism*, pp. 160–162.

83 Luke, 19:27.

> toward the deceiver, for this reason they call down upon themselves the fitting punishment, face to face with the all-seeing, all-ruling eye of justice. Slaughter them before me, those who are not willing to recognize the kingdom, so that they might recognize the kingdom and justice unwillingly, those who called down chastisements upon themselves …
>
> But consider these things and after considering them flee the blow which you saw being inflicted on others, before the imposition of torture, that fearful and dreadful manifestation of pain, recoil from your folly before the punishment is due. For repentance and the fear of suffering know that this holds no gain. Until the time of penitence we shall point the way to repentance. So long as the door of pardon remains open, we would not delay to pass through it. So long as there are thoughtless boasts, we shall show correction. For when the signal is given and life is dissolved, no route to salvation remains at all, nor is there any hope of not suffering what was threatened. For when the teacher of apostasy inscribes something, clearly and without any subtlety, besides the gospel phrases, will the just judge exact punishment – which is manifest and completely clear from all the things shown – over these sort of people, those students of that teacher who do not wish the judge to rule over them, or will those who still love the apostasy after all these things find some remaining defence? What remnant of pardon do they leave behind for themselves? Which eye will drip tears of pity for them? Their teacher – that is clearly the devil – learnt from the Gospels about students before his own, that these were slaughtered before the Lord, those who did not wish him to rule over them. The august Gospels of our Saviour teach this loudly because they are venerators of the devil, because those insulters of the creator divide the kingdom of God – the same holy works have proclaimed this too. Surely if the judge did not turn them away from apostasy on these accounts, the thing remaining to them is the endless fire, and the outer darkness, which has been prepared for their teaching. The devil and those unwilling men, being bereft of aid, should shrink from their war against God. But these things should be very obvious from this discourse and homily.[84]

Although the tenor of Photios' thought is complex here, he clearly considers the death penalty appropriate for those who remain impenitent and emphasises punishment more than repentance throughout. On first impressions,

84 Photios, *Contra Manichaeos* II-IV, 3:19, *Patrologia Graeca* 102, col. 175–178.

his antagonistic language is only slightly more clement than the *History*. The manner in which repentance is developed is, however, of considerable interest, since Photios implies that while this is a possibility, in practical terms it is almost impossible for the heretics under discussion. The door of pardon may remain theoretically open, but Photios implies that it is effectively shut. Given the seriousness of their heresy, "what remnant of pardon do they leave behind for themselves?" In the context of this passage, Photios considers capital punishment appropriate for the Paulicians, which is not surprising given that his career saw the highpoint of their military threat. Nevertheless, it is still important that the possibility of repentance is acknowledged, even if it does not apply in this specific rhetorical context.

The *Retractatio*, by contrast, implies that repentance is a real possibility, which is not surprising given the pastoral concerns which animate it:

> For behold, he who is benevolent by nature imposes a vengeful decree against them with such great severity and zealousness. He says: "My enemies, those who do not wish me to rule over them, lead them here and slaughter them before me." What do you say? Do you shudder at the decree and flee the slaughter? And by dividing yourself from others, do you depart the kingdom of the good God? And do you look toward correction, by which you may confess the Lord's perfect principle, and recover the dominion of both body and soul? Or will your love of strife go so far as suffering the most wretched things which can be suffered, about which nothing harsher can be shown in writing? For he not only kills you, nor leads you from the present life, but after killing you he places you in the eternal, perpetual, fiery Gehenna and consigns you to be punished in soul and body. For I certainly know which of the two is better for you: either to be inflicted with piercing missiles which destroy utterly, ingeniously, and in many ways by still persisting in such greatly impious thought, or to take the saving drugs and remedies of disease from the benevolent and all-ruling tongue itself, you will then have a love of health, instead of lying wounded. Overcome this, I exhort you, and I shall assist with the deliverance from disease.[85]

As in the previous extract, Photios employs the quotation Luke 19:27 to show that the rejection of God leads to death and eternal damnation, but in this instance repentance is not an abstract notion which is ultimately denied, but a

85 Photios, *Contra Manichaeos* II-IV, 4:3, *Patrologia Graeca* 102, col. 183–186.

real possibility to which he exhorts his correspondent. The difference between the two views that Photios espouses is clearly context specific. When this is acknowledged, the fact that he refers to repentance in the first instance is significant in itself, since it implies that this is often appropriate, albeit not in that instance. Photios' thought in these sermons is considerably more nuanced than Peter of Sicily's approach in the *History*, which argues for a blanket application of the death penalty. This is further supported by the conciliatory approach that Photios used in other instances, such as his reference to the conversion of Paulicians in his encyclical letter of 867.[86] Overall, the views which animate these references fit more comfortably with the approach outlined in the *Letter of Theophylaktos*, even though the bellicose language that Photios employs is not entirely out of kilter with the *History*. We should not necessarily assume that he disavowed harsh punishments in all instances, whereas his repeated invocation of Luke 19:27 perhaps suggests that the passage was often cited in contemporary discourse, in which case more ruthless penalties may well have been advocated or adopted.

Despite the fact that Photios' rhetoric suggests a context-specific approach to punishment, we cannot necessarily conclude that this would have been how these sermons and, by extension to them, the *Brief History* were read at the court of Constantine VII, particularly because their references to punishment are so few. It is most probable that readings of the text did not centre upon punishment at all. As acknowledged at the outset, Pseudo-Photios' text is ambiguous enough to be conducive to contrasting readings and this ambiguity is only accentuated when it is read in conjunction with other works. The interpretive possibilities are legion, as is to be expected given the evolving representation of Paulician activity in Byzantine sources of the 10th century. If we seek more clarity, the pseudonymous attribution of the work does not prove of help – and suggests that the interpretive ambiguity is deliberate. Although the text was attributed to Metrophanes of Smyrna early in its manuscript tradition, its style is so characteristically Photian that the patriarch must have been credited with its authorship soon after the text's circulation. The attribution itself therefore suggests an intention to deceive or obscure. To add to these difficulties, the reputation of both authors were contested during Constantine VII's reign.[87]

86 Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep.* 2, vol. 1, p. 41, l. 27–30.

87 Rabidly anti-Photian texts such as the *Vita Ignatii* show that Photios' reputation was contentious in the early 10th century. The same seems to be true of Constantine VII's reign. Genesios' account of the conflict between Ignatios and Photios shows sympathy to the former and fails to recount Photios' accession. The Continuator and the *Vita Basilii* are more favourable to Photios and consider him to be the legitimate patriarch, albeit in the latter source this is only made explicit after Ignatios' death. See Niketas David,

That being said, many of the observations presented thus far indicate that the *Brief History* was intended as a response of some kind to the *History* and this is further implied by the circumstances of its forgery. Since the *Brief History* involved such scant consultation of other works, it could have been composed comparatively swiftly. There are good reasons to suspect that the forgers of the *History*, or at least individuals close to them, were responsible for it. The number symbolism which underlies the dating schemata of both texts, detailed in Appendix 1, implies a close familiarity with the *History*, or at the very least, a method of reading heresiological texts common to it. Moreover, numerous factors, including its scholarly pretensions and its correction of the *History*'s ambiguities and errors, suggest an attempt to redress the deficiencies of its parent text. If the same forgers were responsible for both texts, and the testimony of the *History* was questioned upon its initial circulation, the production of a corroborating text may have served to allay some of these suspicions. If so, the *History* may never have reached its intended audience at the court of Constantine VII, or it may have been received unfavourably there. In this scenario, we must suspect that the controversy surrounding the *History* had receded before the *Brief History* was 'discovered', or contemporaries would surely have suspected foul play. Given the uncontroversial and outwardly erudite character of the *Brief History*, it is possible that it represents an attempt to corroborate aspects of the *History*'s account without insisting upon its more contentious arguments. Contemporary witnesses suggest that the *History*'s standpoint was politically inexpedient, so it was futile to reiterate it. This strikes me as the best way of reconciling our disparate evidence, but I have no desire to insist too forcibly on an interpretation which is necessarily speculative.[88] Taking into account the equivocation that characterises the *Brief*

Nicetas David, the Paphlagonian. The Life of Patriarch Ignatius, ed. and trans. Andrew Smithies (Washington, D.C., 2013), *in passim*; Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:18, pp. 70–72. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 87–90. See also Kaldellis, ed., *Genesios. On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. xviii; Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:30–34, pp. 274–279; Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 32; 44, pp. 124–137; 158–161. Meanwhile, both Genesios and the Continuator implicate Metrophanes' mother in an iconoclast plot to discredit the patriarch Methodios, in which Metrophanes' mother alleged that Methodios had seduced her and, it is implied, fathered her son. Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:5, pp. 59–60. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 75–76; Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:10, pp. 224–229.

88 Naturally, the above reconstruction assumes that the *History* was disseminated prior to the *Brief History*. Might it also be possible that the *History* was found deficient by its patrons, in which case it was not necessarily circulated upon its composition? This might more readily explain why the *Brief History* was commissioned as a replacement and why

History and the political tensions inherent in debates about punishment, any reconstruction of the text's context soon multiplies the number of assumptions beyond the limits that prudence dictates, particularly when factors as problematic as reception and intentionality are at play. If little else is clear, it at least seems probable we are dealing with a charged atmosphere incorporating a multiplicity of competing agencies and contextual factors. Perhaps the most apposite conclusion to draw is that, for all the shortcomings of Peter of Sicily's composition, it did provide a holistic account of Paulician activity that drew on little-known sources and enlightened hitherto unexplained phases of the movement's history. Contemporaries seem to have found the *History* unfit to fill the niche it carved out, but, whether by design or not, in time its pretensions were realised in the form of the *Brief History*.

There are, however, a myriad of other ways to interpret our forgeries, so instead of ploughing this furrow any further, let us return to the aims of this chapter and address the relevance of the *Brief History* to the reinvention of the Paulicians. Most notably, this text suggests that the *History*, despite being the first attempt to provide a coherent account of Paulician activity, was not received well by contemporaries due to its polemical aims. By contrast, the *Brief History*, whose original insights were negligible, had a significant influence on subsequent texts. Irrespective of how these forgeries are interpreted, the very fact of their production shows that the Paulicians and their beliefs provoked a deep-seated interest among Byzantines during the mid-10th century. This is a point which needs emphasising, since we have seen that they were often peripheral to the concerns of contemporary histories such as the *Basileion*, the *Vita Basilii*, and *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV, which interpreted them in terms of overarching objectives such as a desire to legitimate a ruler, dynasty, and/or ideological position, in the process portraying them in a polyvalent fashion which incorporated Manichaean and Islamic identifications. The inescapable conclusion seems to be that it was the research which underpinned these histories that led to the subsequent interest in the Paulicians. In this sense, their reinvention by successive historians led them to become a locus of interest in and of themselves.

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it had greater influence on later texts. This reconstruction has its advantages, but it is also problematised by the fact that the *History* evidently did circulate at some point, as is shown by the reference to Peter Hegoumenos in *Parisinus graecus* 852 and the fact that *Abjuration Formula I* is indebted to it.

5 Forgery, Authority, and Authenticity in the 10th Century

With the *Brief History* we reach the last of the 10th-century texts that participated in the reinvention of the Paulicians. The texts which follow it, most notably the *Letter of Theophylaktos Lekapenos*, are content to reiterate its testimony, whereas those 10th-century events which concern Paulicians, such as John Tzimiskes' relocation of them from Antioch to Philippopolis, are themselves recounted in later sources. Two remarks need stressing here. Firstly, the *Letter of Theophylaktos* was probably written some years after the composition of the *Brief History*, since only in this fourth letter in the correspondence did the *cartophylax* John identify the heresy which preoccupied Tsar Peter as a mix of "Manichaeanism and Paulianism." It is hardly likely that he would have taken so long to do so if Paulicians were a subject of contemporary dispute. It seems that the reinvention of the Paulicians that we have seen during Constantine VII's reign may not have had immediate resonance in ecclesiastical circles, although admittedly the oversight of the patriarchate in this instance may stem from the inefficacy of Theophylaktos, who was apparently more preoccupied with his horses than his responsibilities.[89] Secondly, the modifications and interpolations which gave the *History of the Paulicians* a closer relevance to Bulgarian affairs are presumably related to either the context which underpins the correspondence between Tsar Peter and the patriarchate and/or John Tzimiskes' relocation of Paulicians to Philippopolis. This reorientation of the text shows that Paulicians continued to be relevant after the *History*'s initial dissemination and that this relevance bridged multiple contexts. It is now time to step back from the specifics of textual reception and instead examine the repercussions of our findings for the broader intellectual context of the 10th century.

One of the most attractive possibilities that this chapter raises is that it decentres intellectual activity in Constantine VII's reign from the emperor himself. Debates about the literary output of Constantine and his court have traditionally focused on whether works such as the *Vita Basilii* should be attributed to Constantine's hand, whether he was the driving force of contemporary intellectual activity, or, as Ihor Ševčenko's famous article would have it, he was something of an armchair critic whose classicism and literary output have been grossly overstated.[90] This chapter tends towards the latter view, but it also

89 John Skylitzes, *Ioannis Scylitzae synopsis historiarum*, 10, pp. 242–244. Translation: *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, pp. 234–235.

90 Ihor Ševčenko, "Rereading Constantine Porphyrogenitus," in *Byzantine Diplomacy: Papers from the Twenty-fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990*, eds. Jonathan Shepard, Simon Franklin (Aldershot, 1992), pp. 167–196.

suggests that literary production was not just confined to officially sanctioned works of the court circle. However we interpret our two forgeries, it seems inconceivable that Constantine or any of his most trusted officials were aware of their composition. Contemporary intellectuals evidently tried to hoodwink his court into inflicting capital punishment on the Paulicians. All indications suggest that this attempt failed and more merciful approaches remained the norm, but it is unclear how and why this was so. It is similarly uncertain whether the revised version of the text, with its references to Bulgaria, was intended for a similar courtly audience or whether it simply sought to reaffirm its sentiments regarding the validity of punishment. Finally, it seems eminently probable that these texts were not wholly about Paulicians, heresy, and capital punishment. The ingenuity and controversy we have seen over the course of these two chapters perhaps hint at deeper tensions which cut across the ecclesiastical and secular arms of government. Be that as it may, it appears that advocating the death penalty for heretics during Constantine VII's reign was considered an extreme position which was on the fringes of being politically acceptable.

Beyond these concerns, I have sought throughout to develop a greater sense of intellectual continuity between Constantine's sole reign and the period which preceded it. The works attributed to his school are manifold, but it does not follow that all of these texts had their genesis after he achieved preeminence. Irrespective of whether they are considered forgeries or not, our Paulician texts have often been dated uncomfortably close to one another. For my part, it is easiest to explain this, and the literary productions of Constantine's reign more generally, by positing that literary activity did not begin in earnest upon Constantine's eventual triumph over his imperial rivals and that much of the preliminary research had been well underway beforehand. The ideological agenda which came to underpin the new regime presumably existed in embryonic form, only to be refined and reimagined within the texts commissioned under his tutelage. It is possible, for instance, to read the respective portrayals of Basil I in Genesios' *Basileion* and the *Vita Basilii*, as well as the blackening of Michael III's name in *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV, as a series of attempts to articulate Basil's centrality to the Macedonian dynasty. In the case of his grandfather's portrayal, it seems likely that Constantine himself was actively engaged, but in other instances his input was perhaps more peripheral.

Another significant point of interest lies in the importance and prevalence of forgery in this period. It may indeed be futile to discern the contemporary relationships, intended or otherwise, between the *History* and *Brief History*, but the former text evidently impelled the composition of the latter. A forgery was considered the most appropriate response to another forgery. This is surely an exceptional state of affairs. We cannot assume that similar dynamics

applied in even a minority of cases. But still, these findings do suggest that forgery was practiced in this period – and more frequently than has commonly been acknowledged. In our instance, it seems to have been considered an intuitive, perhaps even an appropriate response. Why was this the case? Forgery had long been a matter of concern in Byzantine society. It was a notable preoccupation of the Third Council of Constantinople (680–681), where the acts of prior councils were subjected to rigorous palaeographical scrutiny.[91] The testimony of roughly contemporary texts on forgery – the most notable being Niketas David's allegations of forgery against Photios in the *Vita Ignatii* – imply that, for those with the means and contacts, sophisticated and convincing forgeries could be made.[92] This seems to be true of the *Brief History*, as there are no indications that its authenticity was questioned until the 19th century. The same cannot necessarily be said for the *History*, whose influence seems to have been negligible and fleeting. We have seen above that it is difficult to determine whether ideological, contextual, or palaeographical factors explain this. As a result, it is eminently possible that the relative preponderance of forgeries at this time was impelled by a comparative wealth of expertise and also by the greater reverence that textual authority and the past commanded in the mid-10th century.[93] It may also be that contemporary understandings of authenticity were not black and white. In certain genres, notably hagiography, a certain degree of literary licence seems to have been expected.[94] Perhaps heresiology was no different. There is little in the above interpretation to suggest that forgery was a heinous act in and of itself. The fact that one forgery could be a response to another forgery attests to this. Instead, it seems that forgery became problematic when it aspired to improper ends or sought to circumvent the usual channels of power.

The final point which merits attention here is that, despite the controversy over the death penalty, the reinvention of the Paulicians was not overtly ideological and, in some senses, it was not even fundamentally about them. The crystallisation of a narrative of Paulician activity in the mid-10th century stemmed largely from the traditional historiographical concerns of

91 Susan Wessel, "Literary Forgery and the Monothelete Controversy: Some Scrupulous Uses of Deception," *Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies* 42:2 (2001), pp. 201–220.

92 Niketas David, *The Life of Patriarch Ignatius*, 89–90, pp. 118–121.

93 On the intellectual context of the period and remarks on the practicalities of textual reproduction, see András Németh, *The Excerpta Constantiniana and the Byzantine Appropriation of the Past* (Cambridge, 2018).

94 Denis F. Sullivan, Alice-Mary Talbot, Stamatina McGrath, eds., *The Life of Saint Basil the Younger. Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Moscow Version* (Washington, D.C., 2014), p. 14.

legitimating a dynasty. In this case, historians sought to legitimise the origins of the Macedonian Dynasty by portraying Basil I as a successful and energetic ruler, which in turn necessitated raising the profile of the enemy over which he prevailed. Strikingly, this did not occasion a pejorative view of the Paulicians. The Continuator sees their insurrection against the empire as a consequence of Byzantine actions and even if it is possible to interpret this as an attempt to lay blame upon the Amorian Dynasty through the person of Theodora, this does not wholly account for our author's appraisal. Among our sources, both Genesios and the *Vita Basilii* mention Paulicians fighting among Byzantine forces not long after the death of Chrysocheir.[95] By contrast to the shrill accusations of heresiologists, Roman historians noted that Paulicians could cross the blurry line between friend and foe. In the early decades of the 9th century, we often encounter belligerent accusations and heavy-handed responses from Byzantine authorities, but the machinery of empire did not inevitably lead to repressive policies. There were dissenters to the official position then and even at the height of the Paulician threat Photios would not forsake the possibility of repentance. A century after Theodora's underlings imposed a bloody conformity on the east, a more measured response won out.

95 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:37, p. 88. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. 110; Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 71, p. 244, l. 16 – p. 245, l. 8.

CHAPTER 3

The *Didaskalie*, the *Letters of Sergios*, and Paulician Belief *c.*800–835

Among the foremost perils of studying religious dissidents in premodern periods is the axiom that we generally know of their beliefs solely through the accusations and refutations of their enemies. This axiom does not apply to the Paulicians, although even an attentive reader who has perused many works on the subject might be forgiven for thinking that it did. Peter of Sicily's polemical retorts may remain fixed on showing that the Paulicians were the contemporary descendants of the Manichaean heresy, but there are many emphases throughout the *History of the Paulicians* which contradict this, not least in Peter's narrative of their history, which has long been recognized as an account originally drawn from Paulician testimony.[1] Scattered among Peter's fervent denunciations of his principal bugbear, the *didaskalos* Sergios-Tychikos, are extracts of Sergios' letters that Peter notes that he had in his possession – and these letters paint a very different picture to Peter's scattergun accusations.[2] Earlier scholars may have probed these passages to a limited extent, but it was only with the pioneering analysis of Claudia Ludwig in the 1980s that the paradigms of debate shifted, most notably with her proposition that the Paulicians were not dualists at all, but rather saw themselves as the spiritual descendants of the early Christian communities described in the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline Letters.[3] Her work comprises the bedrock on which this chapter is built, but here I look to place her conclusions about Paulician belief into a more specific historical context, as well as to articulate the tensions and evolutions within Paulician doctrine. Paramount among the resulting conclusions is

1 Carl R. Moeller, *De Photii Petrique Siculi libris contra Manichaeos scriptis* (Bonn, 1910), pp. 41–43; Nina G. Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy* (Paris/The Hague, 1967), pp. 62–67; Paul Lemerle, "L'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure d'après les sources grecques," *Travaux et mémoires* 5 (1973), p. 56; Paul Speck, "Petros Sikeliotes, seine Historia und der Erzbischof von Bulgarien," *ELLHNIKA* 27 (1974), pp. 384–387.

2 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 43, ed. Denise Papachryssanthou, trans. Jean Gouillard, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 20–23. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 73.

3 Claudia Ludwig, "Wer hat was in welcher Absicht wie beschreiben? Bemerkungen zur Historia des Petros Sikeliotes über die Paulikianer," *Varia 2 ΠΟΙΚΙΛΑ BYZANTINA* 6 (1987), pp. 149–227.

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a reassertion of Ludwig's central thesis: our Paulician sources not only portray an idiosyncratic type of Pauline Christianity, they also fatally undermine the thesis that Paulicians espoused cosmological dualism in the early 9th century.

We have met the two Paulician sources which allow us to make these conclusions briefly before: they are the *Didaskalie* and the *Letters of Sergios*, which were respectively commissioned and composed by the *didaskalos* Sergios-Tychikos. Both are now only preserved in a reworked form within the *History of the Paulicians*, although the means of their preservation is rather different. The *Didaskalie* has been substantially reworked because its extant authorial voice is descriptive and dispassionate, which was evidently not true of the Paulician original. The only emotive passages in the extant account are Peter of Sicily's polemical asides, which serve to denigrate the *didaskaloi* and their claims to sanctity, but these are thankfully easy to discern from the original Paulician material. Rather more problematic is the matter of suppressed or omitted episodes, since the accounts of several *didaskaloi* are unusually brief and hint at a modification of the archetype. Also dubious are the chronological references which pervade the text. Several commentators have found these suspicious and I am fully convinced that they are not original.[4] The longevity the text ascribes to Paulician leaders is inconceivable in this period and it seems certain that Peter of Sicily has historicised the Paulician account to fit it within the framework of Byzantine history.[5] In view of the above caveats, it might surprise the reader to see so much value attributed to the *Didaskalie*, but the rich symbolic depth of the original source has ensured that its core meaning survives in spite of the Sicilian's revisions. The main narrative arc features recurring topoi and intertextual references to other scriptural texts (principally Acts) that contradict the Manichaean portrayal that Peter wishes to impose upon the Paulicians, thereby demonstrating that much of the original voice survives. The text's symbolism, moreover, clearly delimits its beginning, end, and central narrative aim: that the *didaskalos*' predominant concern is to safeguard his community.

Similar pastoral concerns underpin the *Letters of Sergios*, whose surviving state is subtly different from the *Didaskalie*. The extant fragments preserved in the *History* have been excerpted from a more substantial collection, with the result that contextualising them is fraught with difficulty.[6] Pleasingly, however,

4 Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 166–167; 221; Leslie W. Barnard, "The Paulicians and Iconoclasm," in *Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, eds. Anthony Bryer, Judith Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), p. 75.

5 See also Appendix 1.

6 For the extant fragments of these letters, see Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 153, 157, 158, 161, 163, 166, 167, pp. 56–63. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 86–89.

Peter of Sicily has quoted Sergios' words without making any emendations in accordance with the familiar heresiologist's trope of refuting a heretic by his own words.[7] This circumstance is valuable, since it reveals several unusual Greek readings, which probably indicate that Peter found the texts before him corrupt or difficult to read.[8] The value of the letter extracts is often limited, principally because they cannot be securely contextualised, but they can occasionally be valuable indeed, not least because they convey genuinely Paulician attitudes and expressions of belief. When the intended meaning behind such passages shines though, the extracts can be of the utmost importance to our understanding of Paulician thought.

The preceding overview assumes that our two Paulician sources were separate texts which differed in form and aims, but this impression has not found favour with earlier scholarship, since many authorities, including luminaries such as Garsoïan and Ludwig, have argued that the fragments of the *Letters of Sergios* had already been subsumed within the *Didaskalie* when Peter employed the text. This seems unlikely not only in light of the different means of preservation described above, but also because every indication suggests that the *Didaskalie* originally did not relate the career of Sergios – and therefore could hardly incorporate his letters within a preexisting account.[9] In fact, it seems that the account of Sergios' career in the *History* was partially conceived by Peter himself, since its narrative of a young man corrupted into heresy by a Manichaean woman hardly seems representative of how a Paulician author would portray their most famous *didaskalos*, but it does owe much to topoi beloved of heresiological traditions. As now extant, the account of his career constitutes an exemplary warning of the dangers of heretification.[10] The uncertain parameters of Sergios' career in the *History* cause difficulties in contextualising the surviving fragments of the *Letters of Sergios* and thus we

7 As he acknowledges at Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 137, pp. 52–53. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 84.

8 A couple of unusual phrases within these extracts suggest either issues of transmission or idiomatic phrasing by Sergios. Most notable of these is the extract at Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 153, pp. 56–57. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 86. As Ludwig notes, the difficulties are not confined to the unusual phrase *τοῖς ἐμοῖς γόνασι βαρήσας*, since the combination of present and aorist participles is also an issue. See Ludwig, "Wer hat was," p. 214.

9 Garsoïan's contention that an earlier Paulician compiled the *Didaskalie* and *Letters* into a polemical account remains plausible, however. Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 62–67; Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 213–221. By contrast, Speck believes that they comprised separate sources. Speck, "Petros Sikeliotes," pp. 385–386.

10 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 135–152, pp. 52–57. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 83–86. See also Appendix 2.

can go no further than noting that the letters were composed during his ministry (*c.*800/01-834/35). They generally convey pastoral concerns and take the Pauline letters as their models.[11]

Ludwig argued convincingly that the *Didaskalie* also belongs to an early 9th-century milieu, proposing that it was composed under Sergios-Tychikos' direction.[12] Since the text serves to legitimate him, her view is well founded, but we can also offer the additional precision that it was composed in the aftermath of the persecutions enacted by Michael I and Leo V due to the recurring prominence of persecution within the text. We lack the temporal markers to furnish an exact date, but for clarity's sake I consider the years between 815–830 most probable for its composition. Both sources were composed in Greek and their cultural worldview indicates that they belong within a Christian and Byzantine orbit. Imperial officials investigate and bedevil every *didaskalos* described in the text and the empire is thereby portrayed as a hostile and oppressive power, but, despite this, it remains the principal locus of Paulician activity and whenever they flee its grasp they inevitably return. By contrast, references to Islamic and Armenian actors are infrequent, although the text's reference to migrations between the empire and Armenian territory suggests that we would be unwise to draw too clear a distinction between Roman and Armenian cultural zones here. The primary axis of articulating difference seems to be religious, since although Muslims too are portrayed as dangerous to the Paulicians, their characterisation is less developed and of lesser narrative importance than the Romans. Needless to say, this portrayal suggests a compositional context rather different to that of the 840s-870s, when Paulicians and Muslims were close allies. The text's primary intended audience seems to have been an internal Paulician one, but, as we shall see, Paulician identity was rather unstable at this time, so it may also have circulated more widely. If so, this probably occurred as a result of the text's invocation of recognisable scriptural topoi, rather than a deliberate attempt to foster a broader appeal. We can also imagine an internal Paulician audience for the *Letters of Sergios*, since their spiritual archetype, the Pauline letters, were often authored for a particular church community and were expected to be circulated widely within that congregation.[13] In summary,

11 See especially Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 158; 161, pp. 58–61. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 87–88. For similar themes, see 1 Cor.; 2 Cor.; Gal.

12 Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 209–210. Elsewhere, she notes that the text was codified after Sergios and his followers fled to Melitene, but, as we have seen, this flight did not occur during Sergios' career. Claudia Ludwig, "The Paulicians and Ninth-Century Byzantine Thought," in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?*, ed. Leslie Brubaker (Aldershot, 1998), p. 25.

13 John A. Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 3–6.

the *Didaskalie* and *Letters of Sergios* had a similar authorship, audience, and aims, while both were consciously modelled upon scriptural precedents from the apostolic period. These parallels surely indicate that these sources were intentionally related to one another and the biblical works that inspired them. Peter of Sicily notes that the Paulicians considered the *Letters of Sergios* canonical and the same is presumably true of the *Didaskalie*.[14] In their scriptural proclivities as well as much else, the Paulicians of the 9th century invoked, reinterpreted, and, in some sense, relived the zeal and turbulence that characterised the age of the apostles.

1 The *Didaskalie*

Nowhere is this conception more apparent than in the *Didaskalie*. As Ludwig has noted, the text is a mythologised account reflecting how Sergios and his immediate circle conceived of Paulician history rather than an accurate historical narrative.[15] It transposes the concerns of the present onto the past, most notably in the ubiquitous references to persecution. No event that the source describes can be corroborated independently of it. Since Sergios-Tychikos directed the composition of the text, it follows that his aims, unsurprisingly including his own legitimation, predominate, but the *Didaskalie* is also rich enough to include perspectives which differ from – and even oppose – his. It bears emphasising that we have before us an exceptional source. Narratives which describe the growth of heretical movements from their own perspective are of rich value due to their scarcity.[16] Perhaps unsurprisingly for such an unusual work, it resists the confines of conventional genre boundaries. This may be due to its confessional background, its provincial origins, or alternatively, an indebtedness to oral culture. In any event, its value is not appreciably diminished by the circumstance that it has been fundamentally rewritten by Peter of Sicily, even though I believe that Peter's modifications go far beyond

14 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 43, pp. 20–23. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 73.

15 Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 209–211.

16 A parallel from the same region, but without reference to heresy, is Şikari's *History of the Karamanids*, a "semi-historical" Turkish source with roots in nomadic society and oral culture which dates from the 16th century but deals with 13th-century events. See Sara N. Yildiz, "Reconceptualising the Seljuk-Cilician Frontier: Armenians, Latins, and Turks in Conflict and Alliance during the Early Thirteenth Century," in *Borders, Barriers and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta (Turnhout, 2005), pp. 115–117.

what Ludwig supposed. This is because, in spite of the above, the *Didaskalie*'s underlying narrative and many of its symbolic motifs still survive in our extant text, as does its primary aim of legitimating the *didaskalos*.[17] In the source, this concern manifests itself through the recurring topos of a leadership dispute in which an individual who is not the heir of his predecessor triumphs on account of his greater piety. This theme has obvious relevance to Sergios-Tychikos, who was not the appointed successor of his predecessor Joseph-Epaphroditos. Despite this, in what follows it will become apparent that the *Didaskalie* forms a multi-layered narrative which is not entirely subordinated to Sergios' interests.[18]

We begin in Mananalis in Armenia, where a certain Constantine sheltered a deacon who was returning home after being held in Syria as a prisoner of war. In recompense for his hospitality, the deacon gave Constantine the books of "the Gospel and the Apostle." In conventional Byzantine usage, the former of these corresponds with the Gospels, while the latter contains both the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline letters.[19] According to both the *History* and the *Treatise*, which probably dates shortly after the *Didaskalie*, Constantine forbade the use of any other scriptural texts than these, but it is unclear whether this statement belongs to the Paulician exemplar, since we find Paulicians using other texts, including books of the Old Testament, in Sergios' time. In any case, Constantine left Mananalis and came to Kibossa, near Koloneia in north-eastern Asia Minor, claiming that he was the same Silvanos referred to in Acts and the Pauline letters. Hearkening back to the apostolic era once more, he identified those at Kibossa with the Church of the Macedonians founded by Paul. Constantine-Silvanos taught at Kibossa for twenty-seven years, during which time the Paulician community seems to have lived a harmonious existence without any outward interference. Then, for reasons which Peter of Sicily cannot explain, Constantine came to the attention of the reigning emperor, another Constantine, who could conceivably be either Constans II (641–668) or Constantine IV (668–685).[20] This emperor dispatched one of his officials,

17 A useful overview of the *Didaskalie*'s symbolism is given at Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 226–227.

18 On the below, see also Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 154–194.

19 See Robert S. Nelson, "Gospel Book," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan, vol. 2 (New York/Oxford, 1991), p. 861; Johannes Irmscher, Alexander P. Kazhdan, Annemarie Weyl Carr, "Acts," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan, vol. 1. (New York/Oxford, 1991), pp. 16–17.

20 On the difficulty of identifying this emperor, see Lemerle, "L'histoire des Pauliciens," pp. 56–61. As noted above, it is most likely that the references to specific emperors were added by Peter of Sicily.

Symeon, in order to dispose of Constantine and bring his followers back within the orthodox fold. Symeon commanded Constantine's students to stone their master to death, but, in an evocative phrase which assuredly goes back to the Paulician exemplar, they refused and cast their stones behind their backs. As a result, Symeon ordered Justos, Constantine-Silvanos's adoptive son, to stone his father, which he did, killing him at a location that would thereafter be named Soros due to the number of stones piled there.[21]

For a time, the Paulician community remained leaderless, while Symeon attempted to convert Constantine's followers, who invariably preferred death to reconciliation. Their devotion and tenacity made a great impression upon Symeon, who, after returning to Constantinople for three years, repented of his actions and fled back to Kibossa, collecting the disciples of Constantine and renaming himself Titos.[22] Symeon-Titos led the Paulicians for a total of three years, until he had a dispute concerning the interpretation of Colossians 1:16–17 with the same Justos whom he had ordered to kill his adoptive father several years previously. Unfortunately, Peter of Sicily's description of this dispute does not give us any insight into Paulician exegetical practices, since he shoehorns Symeon and Justos into the binary categories of heresy and orthodoxy, however Pseudo-Photios is more explicit and makes Justos assail Symeon's dualism directly.[23] This is clearly a crucial passage that will merit scrutiny below. Evidently the dispute was not settled to Justos' satisfaction since he subsequently went to the Bishop of Koloneia for instruction on the matter. The bishop forthwith informed the emperor Justinian II, who ordered that all those who persisted in the heresy should be burnt alive. Symeon evidently perished in the ensuing conflagration, but it is unclear whether the same is true of Justos.[24] What is apparent is that the unlikely outsider Symeon, who had

21 The name Soros (*Σωρός*) perhaps exploits an ambiguity between *σωρός* (a heap, or mound) and *σορός* (a funerary urn), both of which are appropriate to this context. Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 104–105, pp. 42–45. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 78.

22 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 106–107, pp. 44–45. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 78–79.

23 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 110, pp. 44–47. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 79; Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 70, ed. Wanda Conus-Wolska, trans. Joseph Paramelle, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 144–145.

24 Pseudo-Photios' account suggests that both communities were eradicated, since he notes the destruction of "the other multitude with Symeon" after the initial affair, thereby suggesting that Justos' followers were judged first. Given the deficiencies of the forger's account, it would be unwise to set much store by this, however. See Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 71–72, pp. 144–145.

once persecuted the faith, eventually took precedence over the proclaimed, but flawed, heir Justos.

As far back as Edward Gibbon, historians have recognized intertextual references to Acts at play here, since Constantine is moulded on the protomartyr Stephen and Symeon is based on the apostle Paul.[25] This, together with the reappropriation of the names of Paul's disciples and churches throughout the text, testifies to the central place of Paul and the apostolic era to conceptions of Paulician identity.[26] Surprisingly, this intertextuality is not continued throughout the rest of the narrative, which becomes rather shadowy after the mass immolation described above. After this, some refugees regrouped in Episparis, a village whose name is rich in symbolism, but has never been precisely identified, under the command of an obscure figure known as Paul the Armenian.[27] He is never listed among the *didaskaloi* by Roman writers and is never credited with the name of a Pauline disciple, although the fact that he carries the apostle's name is surely a crucial piece of symbolism.[28] He held some form of authority, since he proposed that his son Gegnesios should be the next leader of the Paulicians and, unlike him, Gegnesios is elsewhere identified as a *didaskalos*. The latter's status was, however, contested by Theodore, another of Paul's sons. The two quarrelled not only over the leadership, but also a form of sanctification that is perhaps closely associated with it: "the grace of the Spirit," which we shall see assumes a place of paramount importance in Paulician thought. Gegnesios ultimately prevailed in the dispute since he subsequently adopted the name Timothy and is acknowledged as such in Byzantine sources which without exception omit mention of Theodore. Peter of Sicily has evidently compressed the particulars of the dispute between the two, so the reasons why Gegnesios-Timothy triumphed cannot be ascertained, but it seems apparent that this episode does not conform to the topos of the

25 Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* vol. 6, ed. John Bagnell Bury (London, 1898), p. 122. Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 168–171; Milan Loos, "Le mouvement paulicien à Byzance," *Byzantinoslavica* 24 (1963), pp. 258–262.

26 Carl Dixon, "Paulician Self-Defence and Self-Definition in the *Didaskalie*," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 63 (2019), pp. 61–80.

27 The geography of the *Didaskalie* implies that Episparis should be within the empire. See further, Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton, eds., *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450* (Manchester, 1998), p. 14, n. 44; p. 75; Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 77–78.

28 For Paul's status (and that of Gegnesios and Theodore below), see *Treatise*, 7, ed. and trans. Charles Astruc, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), p. 84. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. B. Hamilton, J. Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), pp. 93–94.

outsider.[29] As in the case of Symeon and Justos, the dispute between the brothers brought them to the attention of the authorities. The reigning emperor was Leo III, who summoned Gegnesios to be interviewed by the Patriarch of Constantinople.[30] Peter of Sicily gives an account of the ensuing interrogation, but it is highly likely that he has distorted his source text significantly, since the patriarch's six questions closely resemble the six main doctrines Peter himself imputes to the Paulicians.[31] As Peter would have it, Gegnesios outwitted the patriarch by speaking allegorically throughout. Whether this was true of the original account or not, the patriarch exonerated Gegnesios, who subsequently fled imperial lands with his followers, until he reached the first *didaskalos* Constantine-Silvanos' home district of Mananalis. He died there after leading the Paulicians for thirty years in all.[32]

Peter of Sicily does not tell us whom, if anyone, Gegnesios designated as his heir, but upon his death the community once again fractured, with some following Gegnesios' biological son Zacharias and others favouring Joseph, an abandoned bastard born of a prostitute. In this instance, the outsider, Joseph-Epaphroditos, prevails once more. In a crucial piece of symbolism, during the course of their dispute Zacharias strikes Joseph with a stone and almost kills him. Both leaders then left Mananalis separately, only to be intercepted by a Muslim army. Faced by this predicament, Zacharias fled his companions and allowed them to be massacred, whereas Joseph responded to the same situation by convincing the Muslims that he was heading to Syria in order to find pasture for his flocks and make cheese. The ruse was effective and Joseph managed to reach the comparative safety of Episparis. Thus, he saved his followers and became the uncontested leader of the Paulician community.[33] However, dislocation is the norm in the *Didaskalie* and the Paulicians did not enjoy this harmony for long. A Roman official named Krikoraches learnt of Joseph's presence and sought to capture him and, although the man himself eluded

29 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 113, pp. 46–47. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 80.

30 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 113–114, pp. 46–47. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 80.

31 Compare Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 115–120, pp. 46–49. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 80–81 with Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 36–45, pp. 18–23. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 72–74.

32 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 122, pp. 48–49. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 81.

33 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 123–125, pp. 48–51. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 81–82.

Krikoraches, the latter did apprehend his followers. Joseph, meanwhile, fled to Antioch in Pisidia, where he would die some years later.

Joseph's death marks the end of the *Didaskalie* proper, since the account of Sergios-Tychikos' career as now extant in the *History* cannot have been written under Sergios' direction, not only because it is generally unflattering to him, but also because the symbolism which animates the *Didaskalie* has already reached its logical culmination beforehand. The symbolic references to the stonings of Constantine-Silvanos and Joseph-Epaphroditos delimit the beginning and end of the narrative, while, as we shall see, intertextual references to the first four *didaskaloi* reveal that their careers were conceived as a unified whole. The central message behind the *Didaskalie*'s literary and intertextual acrobatics is clear. As Ludwig has noted, the narrative's recurring motif is that of the outsider, who saves the Paulician community through piety or cunning, in the process overcoming a rival of more esteemed ancestry or rank. This has obvious resonance for Sergios, whom the *History* states was not born into a Paulician community and was not the designated successor of his predecessor Joseph-Epaphroditos. That honour fell to Sergios' rival Baanes.[34] Taken as a whole, the *Didaskalie* shows that claims based on precedence should not be taken seriously. Piety takes priority.

So runs the surface narrative, but the *Didaskalie*'s symbolism operates on rather deeper levels than this. Ludwig was once again aware of this, noting that the narrative groups the *didaskaloi* into two pairs, comprising firstly Constantine-Silvanos and Symeon-Titos, and secondly Gegnesios-Timothy and Joseph-Epaphroditos.[35] The former pair teach in the same location, have the same opponent and are both martyred, dying alongside their followers.[36] Insofar as they are based on the apostolic figures of Stephen and Paul, they fit within a scriptural archetype. By contrast, Gegnesios and Joseph too are connected by location, since they both taught at Episparis and Mananalis, whereas their career arcs are similar, since both die in relative peace, having saved their communities from external dangers by deceiving their would-be persecutors. These two *didaskaloi* also legitimate their claim to leadership of the community by claiming to have received "the grace of the Spirit," which in the case of Joseph took precedence over heredity in proving his legitimacy.[37] The existence of these pairs was one of the reasons which led Ludwig to believe that

34 Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 190–191; 209–211; Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 171, pp. 62–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 89.

35 Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 187–194.

36 Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 187–189.

37 Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 189–190.

the *Didaskalie* was designed as a whole, but there is no place in this framework for an account of Sergios' career, which must have originated independently.[38]

This becomes clearer when we consider a fact that Ludwig did not heed: that these pairs of *didaskaloi* are connected to one another by associating one individual from each pair, with Constantine-Silvanos linked to Joseph-Epaphroditos and Symeon-Titos linked to Gegnesios-Timothy. This device serves to further enrich the narrative framework. Thus, Constantine and Joseph both begin their teaching within Mananalis before migrating westward into the empire.[39] Both *didaskaloi* are struck with a stone by their rival, in what is perhaps the *Didaskalie*'s most important piece of symbolism.[40] Before Symeon's inquiry, Constantine leads a unified community, but this state of harmony ends when Justos strikes him with a stone. This act brings dissension into the Paulician community, which endures through the careers of the next two *didaskaloi* Symeon and Gegnesios. However, with Joseph the story comes full circle. At the outset of his career, Joseph contests his position with Zacharias, who strikes Joseph with a stone and almost kills him. Yet since Zacharias' followers are slaughtered by the Muslim army when their leader abandons them, Joseph once more leads the Paulicians without opposition, as Constantine did before Justos killed him. This symmetry must be problematised to some degree, since Joseph was subsequently forced to flee his followers by Krikoraches' inquiry.[41] As for the second link, Symeon travels from Constantinople to Kibossa and is martyred there with his followers. By contrast, Gegnesios makes a similar journey in reverse, travelling from Episparis to the capital, where he is pronounced orthodox. He subsequently preserves his community by fleeing Roman lands.[42] While the juxtaposition of Constantine and Joseph bounds the narrative, the parallels between Symeon and Gegnesios accentuate the text's central message, since the declaration of Gegnesios' orthodoxy at the religious centre of the empire constitutes a stunning vindication of the value of obfuscation and cunning rather than resistance and conflict. Once more, this serves the purpose of legitimating Sergios, who valued accommodation in his dealings with Byzantine authorities in preference to open defiance.

38 Ludwig, "Wer hat was," p. 190.

39 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 94; 121–124, pp. 40–41; 81–82. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 76; 81–82.

40 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 105; 124, pp. 44–45; 48–49. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 78; 81–82.

41 Krikoraches' inquiry may be explained by the narrative logic of designating the Romans as the Paulicians' foremost enemies.

42 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 107; 114, pp. 44–47. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 78–80.

The difficulty of determining whether the emphases of the *Didaskalie* represent only Sergios' views or those of a broader Paulician faithful will be a recurring concern of this chapter, but the most important finding of the above analysis – that is, the nature of Paulician belief itself – is not subject to this problem. In her analysis of the text, Ludwig conclusively showed that the invocation of Pauline names of *didaskaloi* and churches, as well as the intertextual references to Acts, marked the Paulicians as Christians devoted to the works and thought of the apostle Paul. Despite the habitual claims of Byzantine ecclesiastics, indications of dualism are essentially non-existent in the text and, as we shall soon see, extracts from the *Letters of Sergios* show that the Paulicians cannot have been dualists in any conventional sense. More importantly still, the *Didaskalie* helps explain why their belief would spread so successfully in the years after the Byzantine persecutions. By casting the Paulicians as the Christian communities of Acts and their Roman adversaries as the persecutors of the apostolic period, the text rationalised the experience of persecution in an intuitive manner based upon scriptural texts that the Paulicians already utilised.[43] The simplicity and elegance of this response strongly suggests that it became a pervasive element of Paulician discourse shortly after the Roman persecutions, after which it was reworked within the *Didaskalie*. Since our sources imply that Byzantine persecution was a brutal and heavy-handed affair, the *Didaskalie* could also encourage converts from those who were also targeted by these persecutions (including groups such as the Athinganoi, as well as those who were falsely identified as heretics) or those who were otherwise disaffected with the empire. Context suggests that the Paulician response to persecution was more successful than their contemporaries, since whereas the Athinganoi faded from view during the 9th century, the Paulicians became an ever-increasing threat to the empire, albeit not only as a result of their ideological sophistication. Be that as it may, the *Didaskalie* cannot have been part of a deliberate propaganda campaign.[44] Its primary audience is an internal Paulician one, but it gives no indication that they would continue to grow in prominence, since its narrative is one of continual setbacks. Even when a *didaskalos* saves his community, a reversal is never far behind, as in

43 Dixon, "Paulician Self-Defence," pp. 73–74. Note that the narrative of Acts lends itself more easily to anti-Jewish readings than anti-Roman ones. On this, see Shelley Matthews, *Perfect Martyr: The Stoning of Stephen and the Construction of Christian Identity* (New York/Oxford, 2010), pp. 58–77.

44 Contrary to the view I expressed in Carl Dixon, "Between East Rome and Armenia: Paulician Ethnogenesis *c.*780–850," in *Transmitting and Circulating the Late Antique and Byzantine Worlds*, eds. Mirela Ivanova, Hugh Jeffery (Leiden, 2020), p. 262.

the case of Gegnesios' flight from the empire after his patriarchal interview at Constantinople, or Joseph's escape from Krikoraches after saving his followers from Muslim attack. The text does not therefore portray the Paulicians as a successful movement, which implies that whatever wider appeal the text would go on to enjoy was somewhat incidental. Nevertheless, the Pauline topoi noted above suggest that the Paulicians bolstered their identity by conceptualising their lived experience via the piety and perseverance that characterised the Christians of the early church. In that period, the letters of Paul attest the fractiousness of the early Christians and the same is true of the Paulicians, who were equally prone to schism.

2 Schism and the Legitimacy of the *Didaskalos*

The persistent concern of legitimating Sergios in the *Didaskalie* suggests that his authority was not as secure as he would have liked, but the narrative's profound anxiety about the proper sources of religious legitimacy implies that this apprehension transcended his person. Successful challenges to recognized authority are commonplace in the text: Symeon-Titos may have become a Paulician *didaskalos*, but before repenting he had ordered the execution of his predecessor and consigned many of his followers to the grave while attempting to convert them. In a less sanguine vein, the orphaned bastard Joseph became the legitimate *didaskalos* in preference to his predecessor's legitimate son and heir. These precedents clearly go some way to legitimating the upstart Sergios' challenge to his rival Baanes, but they could also have proved to be a double-edged sword with which pretenders could usurp his own authority. It is in this sense that the wealth of symbolic language which pervades the text becomes comprehensible. Symeon-Titos may have been a former persecutor of Paulicians, but he is identified as the legitimate *didaskalos* by the symbolism of his Pauline name, his martyr's death, and the intertextual references which associate him with the Paul of Acts. As the narrative progresses, the repetition and intertextuality of the symbolic framework ensure that it is readily apparent who the true *didaskalos* is, despite the wealth of pretenders and rivals. This is readily understandable: without such a depth of symbolic meaning, the *Didaskalie* would be little more than an invitation to insurrection.

The overriding impression is therefore that the authors of the *Didaskalie* had to go to some lengths in order to legitimate Sergios. This is apparent not just in the above, but also in the observation that aspects of the source reflect less positively on him, which in turn may indicate its incorporation of more longstanding Paulician traditions. In particular, the unfavourable portrayals of

martyrdom and militarism are suspicious, since the former is celebrated in the majority of Christian traditions, whereas Paulicians were especially famed for the latter in the second half of the 9th century. There is perhaps a relationship between the two, since both involve open defiance and the possibility of death, while death in battle can be considered a form of martyrdom, most notably in Islamic traditions.[45] Unfortunately, we lack the evidence to discern whether Paulicians had a similar ethic. In this particular case, the diminished value attributed to martyrdom probably represents an attempt to ameliorate a criticism that Sergios' role dictated more courageous actions during the persecutions of the 810s. Even Peter of Sicily, who seeks to portray Sergios as the most dangerous of all heretics, does not credit the beginnings of organised Paulician raiding to him. Instead, he assigns this to his followers and only has Sergios join them at a later time.[46] Peter should not necessarily be taken at face value here, but some remarks within Sergios' letters display a conciliatory attitude towards Byzantines which must have angered martial Paulicians. In a critically important passage that unfortunately eludes precise contextualisation, Sergios notes that he pleaded with his followers not to hold Romans captive: "I am innocent of these evils, for many times I told them to desist from taking the Romans prisoner and they did not listen to me."[47]

The intended audience of this fragment, and the letter of which it was originally a part, are unclear. Since Sergios invokes "Romans" as a third party, his audience is evidently not a Roman one, although his characterisation of such abductions as "evils" implies that he is ultimately responding to allegations from Romans or those who advocated a rapprochement with them. His most likely correspondent is a Paulician sympathetic to his pacifistic methods. In any event, Sergios disavowed his followers' aggression and this perhaps drew his personal bravery into question. Given the obscurity of the passage's context, we cannot necessarily link it to the era of persecution, but it seems apparent that Sergios' methods faced criticism from more warlike Paulicians and the authors of the *Didaskalie* found this criticism serious enough to acknowledge it.[48]

45 David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge, 2007).

46 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 175–179, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 90–91.

47 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 157, pp. 58–59. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 87.

48 Redgate intriguingly links this quote to Sergios' residence at Argaous, arguing that he disapproved of the raiding and hostage-taking there. This is a seductive idea but seems a little wide of the mark. Sergios' self-righteous tone and reference to "evils" suggests that the extract was written at a particularly low ebb of Paulician fortunes, which can hardly be true of the presence at Argaous. I favour a date shortly after the persecutions of Michael

Preexisting conceptions of what a *didaskalos* should be conditioned the text, so its themes were not solely dictated by Sergios. The *Didaskalie* asserts that the preservation of the community was of greater importance than personal bravery, but we must suspect that many Paulicians held the opposite view.

Sergios' legitimacy was therefore challenged on two axes: not only was he not the appointed heir of his predecessor Joseph-Epaphroditos, but he also opposed militarised resistance and may well have responded indecisively to the Roman persecutions of the 810s. This impression is confirmed by the *Letters of Sergios*, which similarly set much store on themes such as schism and loyalty. This may be expected of pastoral letters which encouraged Paulician communities to uphold their faith, but the prominence of schism within these letters implies that it was a persistent concern. It is conspicuously evident in a passage of the most fundamental importance to our understanding of Paulician belief, which will soon be examined in full. This crucial extract likens the rejection of Sergios' teachings to murder and fornication and, in so doing, considers the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden to be a lesser evil than Cain's murder of Abel, which it likens to apostatising the Paulician community.[49] Once more, the context which engendered this passage cannot be precisely specified. A somewhat less obscure passage, which also concerns dividing the community, is addressed to one Leo the Montanist. Although Montanism (known to its adherents as the New Prophecy) attained most prominence in the 2nd century, it is unclear whether believers still remained in our period. Theophanes writes of Montanists resorting to self-immolation *en masse* in preference to forced baptism during the reign of Leo III, but the group may in fact have been a millennial sect of Jews.[50] Which belief system Leo the Montanist espoused is similarly unclear, but the best explanation is perhaps that of Lemerle, who identifies him as a dissident Paulician.[51] In this instance, Sergios locates Leo outside the community and accuses him of dividing it:

I and Leo V. See also Anne E. Redgate, "Catholicos John III's *Against the Paulicians* and the Paulicians of Tephrike," in *Armenian Sebastia/Sivas and Lesser Armenia*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Los Angeles, 2004), p. 109.

49 Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 219–220.

50 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, ed. Carl de Boor, 2 vols, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1883), p. 401. English translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, eds. and trans. Cyril Mango, Roger Scott (Oxford, 1997), pp. 554–555. On the possibility that the events relate to Severan Jews, see Andrew Sharf, "The Jews, the Montanists and the Emperor Leo III," in *Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium* (Jerusalem, 1995), pp. 115–116. On the New Prophecy, see Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge, 1996).

51 Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 120.

> As for you, give heed to yourself. Refrain from dividing the unwavering faith; what accusation do you bring against us? Have I claimed more than anyone or been haughty? You cannot say so; but if you do say so, your witness is not true. May I never hate you, but rather exhort you to accept shepherds and teachers just as you accept apostles and prophets, four in number, so that you may not become the prey of wild beasts."[52]

Irrespective of Leo's confessional affiliation, Sergios accuses him of both improper belief and of encroaching upon his own spiritual authority. Once again, dividing the faith is an explicit concern.

Sergios' principal method of addressing schism and his contested legitimacy is a traditional one of invoking continuity with his predecessors. As we saw above, his career was not originally related in the *Didaskalie*, but, despite this, his *Letters* show that he participated in the symbolism it expresses by other means. Notably, while listing the *didaskaloi* and the churches that they founded, he refers to himself in the third person using his Pauline name Tychikos.[53] A similar example of an appeal to tradition is found in his letter to the Church of Koloneia:

> Since we have foreknowledge of the reliability of your belief, we are making a reminder to you that just as the churches who came before you[54] received shepherds and teachers – he speaks of Constantine and the rest – in this manner you received a shining lamp, a light-giving star and guide of salvation, as it is written that: 'If your eye is sound, your whole body will shine.'[55]

Here Sergios locates himself within the tradition of his predecessors to convince the Church of Koloneia to maintain their loyalty and faith by implying that he shares mutual traditions with them, which are developed by his

52 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 166, pp. 62–63. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 88–89. The reference to four apostles/prophets presumably corresponds to the evangelists.

53 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 163, pp. 60–61. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 88.

54 There is an inconsistency here. When Sergios references the Paulician churches in his letters, the Church of the Macedonians, at Kibossa, near Koloneia, is the second church, so it should not have been preceded by "churches." Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 163, pp. 60–61. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 88.

55 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 158, pp. 58–59. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 87.

language and quotations from the New Testament. These examples are crucial since they show that although the Sergiote party dictated the *Didaskalie* as now extant, the mythical *didaskaloi* that the text describes evidently instilled considerable reverence in contemporary Paulicians. We must suspect that their status as *didaskaloi* had been established for some time, in which case the *Didaskalie* was evidently founded on more longstanding traditions.

To date we have only addressed the disputed legitimacy of Sergios. A related matter, namely the means by which a *didaskalos* legitimated himself, suggests that this concern afflicted the Paulicians in a more fundamental sense. In the *Didaskalie* there are several factors which contribute to a *didaskalos*'s legitimacy, among which are being the acclaimed heir of their predecessor, preserving or expanding the faith community, or displaying courage in the face of an enemy. Crucially, however, the formal process by which a *didaskalos* assumed their authority is never defined in the *Didaskalie*. As we have seen, the first two Paulician leaders, Constantine and Symeon, are legitimated by their martyrdom, while the third and fourth *didaskaloi,* Gegnesios and Joseph, are legitimised by the preservation of their community. In the former case, there cannot have been a formal means by which authority is transmitted from Constantine to Symeon because there is an interval before Symeon's conversion. While martyrdom is the primary way in which their sanctity is portrayed, this cannot have been a method of legitimation in practice because it can only be fulfilled at death. By contrast, at the time of Gegnesios and his conflict with Theodore, there are two competing succession mechanisms at play: heredity and the "reception of the grace of the Spirit" (*τὴν χάριν εἰληφέναι τοῦ πνεύματος*).[56] In this episode it is unclear which of these two mechanisms predominates, since the *History* notes that Gegnesios and Theodore were still in conflict at the end of their lives, even though Gegnesios is characterised as the legitimate *didaskalos* throughout. If this episode is not decisive, in the next conflict Joseph triumphs over Zacharias and the "reception of the grace of the Spirit" definitively trumps heredity because Zacharias is Gegnesios' son.[57]

Insofar as Sergios is associated with Gegnesios and Joseph through his ability to preserve the Paulician community, we may suspect that "the grace of the Spirit" may be associated with this too. In fact, there is little in the *Didaskalie* to imply so. Critically, there are indications that both Constantine-Silvanos and Symeon-Titos too received "the grace of the Spirit" despite their failure

56 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 112–113, pp. 46–47. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 80.

57 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 123–124, pp. 48–49. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 81–82.

to safeguard their communities. Immediately before his martyrdom in Acts, the protomartyr Stephen is filled with the Spirit and sees a vision of the Son of Man beside God in the heavens.[58] Given the parallels between Stephen and Constantine-Silvanos, it seems likely that the Paulicians understood the latter as receiving the Spirit, whether at his martyrdom or beforehand. By extension, the same was probably true of Symeon-Titos also. Despite its prominence in the narrative, like other factors such as heredity and the preservation of the community "the grace of the Spirit" cannot have been a legitimating criterion in practice because it is only ever claimed in the *Didaskalie* and these claims are habitually contested. This is apparent in the dispute between Gegnesios and his rival Theodore:

> And there was a conflict between both of these brothers, Gegnesios, I say, and Theodore, one saying that he had received the divine grace of the Spirit, the other again alleging this for himself. And thus quarrelling with each other and hating one another completely, the leaders of abomination remained so until the end of their lives.[59]

In this example, the reception of "the grace of the Spirit" does not legitimate Gegnesios since Theodore still retains his claim until his death. Instead, the symbolic allusions of the text, such as the assumption of a name of a Pauline disciple, demonstrate that Gegnesios was the legitimate *didaskalos*. "The grace of the Spirit," like martyrdom, could not legitimate a *didaskalos* in practice. The only criterion which could provide legitimacy, that is, heredity, is dismissed by the *Didaskalie* because Zacharias does not succeed his father Gegnesios. As a result, every signifier that the text connects with the legitimation of the *didaskalos* cannot have operated outside the confines of a narrative.

The most obvious explanation for this conundrum is that the assumption of this title – and the authority and responsibilities associated with it – were not clearly formalised. This would certainly explain both the frequency of leadership disputes among the Paulicians and the *Didaskalie*'s incessant concern with symbolically designating the legitimate *didaskalos*. By all indications, the questions of legitimacy that pervade the text are more fundamental than an attempt to legitimise Sergios and instead involve more longstanding disagreements about the virtues and responsibilities associated with earthly spiritual authority. Our source may fail to adequately explain the legitimation of the

58 Acts 7:55–56.

59 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 113, pp. 46–47. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 80.

didaskalos, but a ready explanation presents itself: the status of the *didaskalos* was dictated by his charismatic leadership and his acceptance by Paulician communities. These factors were presumably central to Sergios' challenge to Baanes, but we should not reduce inter-Paulician conflicts to a binary problem of one leader or another. It is eminently possible that several competitors could have been accepted by different communities at any one time – particularly if early Paulicians arose independently in different places and with different doctrinal emphases before coalescing into a recognisable identification. This is precisely what I think happened. In the process, the characteristically Paulician phrase "the grace of the Spirit" became associated with the sanctification of the *didaskalos*, but it is probable that this phraseology was originally confined neither to this nor the religious hierarchy more generally. The ordinary Paulician adherent is essentially invisible in the *Didaskalie*, which narrates the actions of male clerical elites, as is only to be expected for a work of this period. A deeper reading suggests something rather different: the judgement of the rank and file could make or break a *didaskalos*. The reluctance of our Paulician sources to acknowledge this implies a movement in considerable flux during the early 9th century. The *Didaskalie* may not provide a reliable account of Paulician history, but it tells us much about the period of its composition. When read in conjunction with the *Letters of Sergios*, it allows us to shatter a longstanding illusion: the Paulicians' alleged dualism.

3 Dualism and "the Grace of the Spirit"

The Paulicians have rarely impinged upon the popular imagination, but where they have it is as precursors of the much better known Cathars, who are a rarity in consistently provoking the interest of both popular and academic historians. As a consequence, the starting point for the uninitiated is that the Paulicians were dualists who founded a religious tradition which spread over the course of four centuries from Asia Minor to Bulgaria and thence to the Languedoc and Lombardy, where these later manifestations would imperil the heartlands of the Catholic Church. This emphasis, or at least the dualist identification, have been maintained by most authorities, unsurprisingly since Paulicians are consistently accused of dualism in contemporary Greek sources. While Armenian specialists have dissented from this position and instead interpreted them as adoptionists, the most pressing critique of the dualist position was raised by Ludwig, who employed a methodology so self-evident that it is difficult to conceive why it had not been utilised before: she read the Paulician material on its own merits to see whether it justified the accusations of the

Greek heresiologists. Concluding that it did not, she interpreted the Paulicians as largely conventional Christians whose beliefs were indebted to the teachings and writings of the apostle Paul, although she did not tackle the matter of dualism head on. This shall be our task here and our conclusions will resoundingly endorse Ludwig's position.

Our primary points of comparison on the Paulician side are naturally the *Didaskalie* and the *Letters of Sergios*, while from the Byzantine perspective I have preferred the *Treatise* to the *History of the Paulicians* and the *Brief History* because it is almost contemporary with the Paulician texts, being at most a couple of decades later than them (*c*.834/35–843). Moreover, since it refers to the *didaskaloi* and churches described by the *Didaskalie* and *Letters of Sergios*, its writer evidently knew of these sources or traditions closely related to them. It is, however, important to note that, since the later forged texts make much the same accusations as the *Treatise*, our argument would be similar irrespective of the Roman source used. Equally notably, since we have insufficient testimony from other periods, the arguments made here are most applicable to the early 9th century and should not be transposed to other periods without adequate justification. It does seem safe to posit that the Paulicians did not espouse dualism before the composition of the *Didaskalie* and *Letters of Sergios*, not only because there are no indications of dualism in these sources whatsoever, but also because, as we shall see, in a number of instances the accusations of the Byzantine texts are mendacious, manifestly inaccurate, and betray scant engagement with these works. Given the absence of later Paulician testimony, we lack the means to appraise the existence of dualism in subsequent periods, including during the careers of Karbeas and Chrysocheir. Taking into account the momentous changes that had occurred during the intervening years and the dynamism of Paulician belief in the early period, we would be complacent to posit straightforward continuity with later eras. As a result, although these conclusions present a serious obstacle to the traditional thesis of Paulician influence on the later Bogomils and Cathars, surmounting this impediment would entail a separate study in itself.

In existing scholarship, the Paulicians are considered absolute dualists, that is, they held that the good and evil principles were coeternal and in no way subordinate to one another, much like the ancient Marcionites and, in Christian eyes, Manichaeans (the latter's cosmology, while broadly reducible to a conflict between good and evil, was in fact much more complex).[60] This

60 On Manichaean cosmology, see Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China* (Manchester, 1985), pp. 8–24.

interpretation has been substantiated through the allegations of the Greek polemical sources, which combine accusations of dualism with related doctrines, such as docetism and the rejection of the Old Testament.[61] By contrast, here we shall place less store on these allegations and instead base our analysis on the Paulician testimony in the *Didaskalie* and the *Letters of Sergios*, with the latter assuming most prominence. The *Didaskalie* does, however, contain a little-known passage whose significance for the dualist interpretation has not yet been sufficiently recognized. The extract in question is the dispute between Symeon and Justos noted above, which revolves around the interpretation of Colossians 1:16–17.[62] This passage relates to the Son's relationship with both the Father and heavenly and terrestrial authority, so it certainly would be of interest to dualist exegetes:

> For in him [the Son] all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things and in him all things hold together.[63]

Before addressing this passage specifically, it is important to note in passing that this dispute argues against a conventionally Marcionite provenance for Paulician doctrine, as many have proposed, since the passage in question was not accepted as canonical by Marcion.[64] As for our aims here, it is difficult to contextualise the interpretation of Colossians 1:16–17 with other Paulician testimony because this is the only scriptural quotation invoked within the *Didaskalie* that focuses upon the Son and the Father. Other Paulician uses of scripture, which are mostly confined to the *Letters of Sergios*, focus overwhelmingly on the Holy Spirit, which seems to have been rather more central to their thought.

The way forward therefore lies in the interpretation of the above quotation given by our polemicists. Somewhat surprisingly, Peter of Sicily and

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61 *Treatise*, 9–24, pp. 85–92. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 94–96; Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 36–45, pp. 18–23. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 72–74.

62 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 110, pp. 44–47. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 79.

63 Col. 1:16–17.

64 Judith Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 264; Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, 5:19.3–6, ed. and trans. Ernest Evans, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1972), pp. 630–633.

Pseudo-Photios give different emphases, with only the latter explicitly invoking a dualist interpretation. Peter of Sicily explains the dispute as follows:

> Although Justos insisted, saying, 'Let us not deceive the people and in ignorance destroy their souls, by teaching something other than the words of the apostle. We shall have to pay for their souls at the terrifying judgement.' Symeon did not agree; he persisted in twisting and perverting the sense of the words in this way and that, as was his habit.[65]

Here Peter portrays Justos as a pseudo-orthodox figure in contrast to the heretical Symeon, but he never explains the nature of Symeon's error. Pseudo-Photios, on the other hand, explicitly alleges that Symeon taught that the Father did not create the earth:

> Having put this passage forward, [Justos] opposed the interpretation of Symeon, saying that they had fallen into error and deceived their followers by not truly identifying the creator of heaven and earth as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but some other, whom the apostolic sayings do not know.[66]

This is the sole reference within our Paulician sources that testifies to a dualistic conception of the cosmos and accordingly it deserves great respect. It seems certain that the dispute itself was original to the *Didaskalie*, since the contested phrase lies within the Pauline letters which were so crucial to Paulician thought, but it is much less clear whether any indications of dualism were present in the archetype. If they were, for instance, we would expect Peter of Sicily to have made the claim in addition to Pseudo-Photios. The two most convincing explanations are either that the passage attests a genuine dualist emphasis in the *Didaskalie* that is now only evident in this one instance, or that Pseudo-Photios has imposed a dualist reading upon the text. As we shall see, the latter possibility seems most likely because there is abundant evidence elsewhere that Roman polemicists did not meaningfully engage with the spiritual emphases of the Paulician material. When we compare Roman allegations with the *Letters of Sergios* it quickly becomes apparent that these claims are tenuous or distorted at best and that the Paulicians cannot have been dualists in the sense that the Byzantine tradition insists.

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65 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 110, pp. 44–47. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 79.

66 Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 70, pp. 144–145.

This becomes apparent while appraising their alleged rejection of the Old Testament, or more properly, the sense of continuity between the Old and New Covenants. It is often stated that dualists rejected the Old Testament, but, in most instances, they did in fact refer to it in their writings, reading it allegorically to show that its god was not the heavenly Father who had sent the Son.[67] Notably, the *Treatise* does not accuse the Paulicians of straightforwardly rejecting the Old Testament:

> They reject the prophets and other saints. They abhor and reject the holy Peter, the great chief apostle even more so. They say that none of these is in the party of those who are to be saved.[68]

The passage is clearly directed against several spiritual authorities, rather than the Old Testament as such. Peter of Sicily, by contrast, alleges a more wholesale rejection, noting that "they do not accept an ancient book of any sort, calling the prophets brigands and cheats."[69] Neither of our heresiological texts directly refers to the Old Testament, but this is unsurprising given that it was so rarely consulted as a single work in our period.[70] Both texts do, however, imply that the Paulicians did not use it in another instance, while noting that Constantine-Silvanos forbade the consultation of any book except "the Gospel and the Apostle."[71] Constantine's prohibition is among the most enigmatic references in all our sources. Since it posits canonical scriptural texts as the foundation of Paulician belief, we would expect that it derives from genuine Paulician testimony, but, as we shall see below, the *Letters of Sergios* show that Sergios used other texts, which Peter of Sicily corroborates by noting that the Paulicians accept the epistles of James and Jude, as well as the three epistles of John.[72] In fact, it seems that Constantine's belief in the primacy of the Gospel

67 Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic*, pp. 121–122; 230; Evgenïa Moiseeva, "The Old Testament in Fourth-Century Christian-Manichaean Polemic," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 11:2 (2018), pp. 281–282.

68 *Treatise*, 13, p. 88. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 95.

69 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 42, pp. 20–21. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 73.

70 James Miller, "The Prophetologion: The Old Testament of Byzantine Christianity?," in *The Old Testament in Byzantium*, eds. Paul Magdalino, Robert S. Nelson (Washington, D.C., 2010), pp. 55–57.

71 *Treatise*, 4, p. 81. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 93; Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 96, pp. 40–41. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 76–77.

72 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 42, pp. 22–23. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 73. The Hamiltons noted a passage pertaining to Bogomils in the Synodikon of Orthodoxy which accuses one Tychikos of misinterpreting the scriptures, especially

and the Apostle does derive from the Paulician archetype, but that this inflexibility had been rejected by the time of Sergios, if not beforehand. For instance, several of our texts state that Constantine only taught orally, but the existence of Sergios's letters show that the final *didaskalos* did not, whereas the fact that he adopted conventional modes of exegesis shows that he broke Constantine's prohibitions in both letter and spirit.[73] This is nowhere more evident than in Sergios' use of the Old Testament, which assumes great importance here because a sense of discontinuity between the two testaments is fundamental to dualist belief systems such as Marcionism and, less certainly, Manichaeism.[74]

That the Paulicians did not posit such a discontinuity – and therefore cannot have been dualists in any conventional sense – is evident from a fascinating extract of the *Letters of Sergios*, which likens schism to sin and fornication by reading Genesis in combination with 1 Corinthians 6:18. As with most extracts of Sergios' correspondence, articulating the context of the passage is troublesome, but the phrase "We are the body of Christ," strongly suggests a Paulician audience, as does the fact that the passage is concerned with averting schism:[75]

> Elsewhere you [Sergios] said: "The first fornication which we have inherited from Adam is a good work (*εὐεργεσία*), but the second fornication is more serious (*μείζων*),[76] about which it is said: 'He who fornicates sins

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the Gospel of Matthew, which they interpret to mean that Sergios-Tychikos composed a commentary on Matthew. The source is too late and confused to support this view, however. On this, see Hamilton, Hamilton, eds., *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 39, n. 125; p. 137; *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 191; 207–208.

73 While the *History* never states that Constantine-Silvanos only taught orally, this is noted by the *Treatise* and the *Brief History*, although the latter is dependent on the former. See *Treatise*, 4, p. 81. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 93; Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 6, pp. 122–123.

74 Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic*, p. 6. There is some indication that the Manichaean rejection of the Old Testament may have postdated Mani and arose under his disciples, notably Adda. On this, see Moiseeva, "The Old Testament," pp. 285–292.

75 The passage has rarely been discussed in recent times, aside from the analyses of Lemerle and Ludwig, with which I shall largely agree in the following discussion. See Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 121–122; Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 219–220. The extract received some attention in 19th-century scholarship, such as in the work of Neander, who interprets it in light of Paulician dualism, and Döllinger, who argues that it testifies to the reformer Sergios's criticism of the traditional antinomian party under Baanes. See August Neander, *Allgemeine Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche*, vol. 3 (Hamburg, 1834), pp. 523–526; J.J. Ignaz von Döllinger, *Beiträge zur Sektengeschichte des Mittelalters*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Munich, 1890), pp. 17–18.

76 The translation of *εὐεργεσία* is troublesome, as noted by Lemerle. Discussion of the term has generally focused on how the Fall of Adam and Eve could be considered a 'good work',

> against his own body.' "[77] You go on to say, "We are the body of Christ; if anyone overthrows the traditions of the body of Christ – these are my things – he sins, because he runs to those who teach otherwise and disobeys healthy words."[78]

As Lemerle and Ludwig among others have rightly noted, the first fornication described here is Adam's and Eve's expulsion from paradise, whereas the second is Cain's murder of Abel, but it is surprising to see the latter labelled "a fornication."[79] It is usually characterised as a sin, for reasons which Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 6:18, but which Sergios leaves unsaid: "Every sin that a person commits is outside the body." Cain's act of murder is only considered a fornication because Sergios understands Abel to be part of Cain's own body in the sense that they are both allegorically part of the body of Christ. This reading is entirely conventional, since at 1 Corinthians 6:15 Paul invokes "the body of Christ" as a vehicle of communal self-understanding for the Christian faithful. As a result, the passage interprets sinning against the Christian – that is, the Paulician – community as more serious than bodily sin, thereby once again addressing the concern with schism we have observed throughout this chapter.

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but it should be noted that this is not the focus of the passage, which is far more concerned with an allegorical reading of Cain's murder of Abel and, by extension, sin and schism. The Fall is probably invoked only because it is the obvious comparison point for a discussion of sin. In any case, it is apparent elsewhere in his writings that Sergios' diction is unconventional when compared with Byzantine texts of the period. It is, for instance, unusual that he refers to the "traditions of the body of Christ" as "my things" when he invokes a communal "We" earlier in the passage while identifying the Paulician community as this "body of Christ." The uncertain context of the passage and its selective quotation by Peter of Sicily are evidently stumbling blocks to resolving these ambiguities. See also Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 121–122.

77 1 Cor. 6:18.

78 1 Tim. 6:3. Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 167, pp. 62–63. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 89.

79 Gen. 3–4. Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 121–122; Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 219–220. Both Lemerle and Ludwig believe the passage is concerned with sin and schism. Lemerle reads the scriptural passages cited in the extract together with Rom. 5:12–21 to suggest that the grace of one man (Christ) ultimately redeemed all those who fell as a result of the sin of one man (Adam). Therefore, in a broader soteriological context this might be considered a good thing, whereas the same is not true of division and schism. Ludwig, by contrast, notes the significance of schism to the events of the *Didaskalie*, such as the respective rivalries of firstly Gegnesios and Theodore; and secondly Joseph and Zacharias. In particular, the divine favour shown to Abel in preference to the firstborn Cain correlates well with the lack of emphasis on heredity and appointed succession in the Paulician mythos.

Read with an attentive eye, this passage convincingly proves that the Paulicians did not reject the Old Testament in Sergios' day – and it strongly intimates that they were not dualists either.[80] Since Sergios uses examples from the Old Testament to orient his discussion and articulate its theological meaning, he evidently does not reject it. He is clear that both pericopes from Genesis have continued relevance to his own followers if read according to the standard exegetical practice of interpreting the Old and New Testaments together to corroborate one another. By reinterpreting Cain's actions in light of the Pauline letters, Sergios appeals to his followers to hold to their faith and remain united, as we might expect of any pastoral sermon. His approach is entirely conventional; it is only the confessional affiliation which would surprise a contemporary. Furthermore, since Sergios does not clarify what the second fornication is, it follows that he expects his Paulician audience to understand this for themselves, thereby suggesting that they too would be familiar with books of the Old Testament. The conclusion is clear: in the early 9th century, the Paulicians did not reject the Old Testament and its continuity with the New Testament.[81] But we can go further than this. In all of the above, there is no indication of the allegorical readings that are beloved of dualist exegetes. This is especially significant because the episodes that Sergios recounts were of paramount importance to dualist cosmology and soteriology, since Adam's creation and transgression mark the beginning of the evil principle's dominion over human affairs, whether by confining their souls in his own material vessels or by fashioning humanity himself. The idea that the debasement of the human species could be invoked positively in any dualist tradition is anathema irrespective of context, but it is utterly unthinkable here, since any allusion to man's alienation from the higher god would subvert Sergios' intended aim of fostering unity. Yet the *didaskalos*' meaning is clear: the fall of Adam can be interpreted positively, either because it is the trigger which ultimately necessitates the Redeemer's incarnation or, in this context specifically, because it proves an edifying example in comparison with Cain's murder of Abel. As a result, his thought is irreconcilable with any known branch of Christian dualist teaching.

Since neither of our Paulician sources explicitly discuss cosmological themes, we cannot yet seal the coffin of Paulician dualism, but Sergios' exegesis represents

80 For Lemerle's conjectural dualist readings of the extract, which he acknowledges are tentative because the passage does not reflect an attempt to reconcile original sin with dualism, see Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 121, n. 23.

81 Even though both of their interpretations necessitate this, both Lemerle and Ludwig oddly fail to acknowledge this fact.

a very substantial nail in its bulk. There are other nails to hand in the *Letters of Sergios*, however, notably regarding the alleged docetism of the Paulicians, which in the *Treatise* and *History of the Paulicians* underlies their rejection of the Virgin.[82] We have already seen in Sergios' exegesis that he refers to the Paulician faithful as "the body of Christ," which seems to be derived from the idea of Christ's body as community articulated at 1 Corinthians 12:12–27. This emphasis sits very uneasily indeed with the idea that Christ's body was only illusory and references elsewhere in the *Letters* further reiterate the formulation and imply that the Paulicians can in no way have been docetists. Most notably of all, Sergios personifies his importance to this "body of Christ" in two separate passages:

> Let no-one deceive you in any way. You have these promises from God, be confident. I have written to you, having confidence in your hearts, that I am the door-keeper, the good shepherd, the guide of the body of Christ, the light of the house of God, and I am with you always to the close of the world. If I am absent in the body, still I am present in the Spirit.[83] For the rest, farewell, be strong, and the God of peace will be with you.[84]

> Having heard the reputation of your faith, I remind you that, just as the churches which preceded you had shepherds and teachers (he means Constantine and the rest), so you have received a shining torch, a star of daybreak, a guide to salvation, as it is written: 'If your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light.'[85]

In the first of these extracts, the equivalence of "the body of Christ" with the Paulician community is clear once more, with Sergios assuming the role of guide. Just as crucially, the physical and spiritual are given comparable significance for the Paulician believer: "If I am absent in the body, still I am present in the Spirit"; a phrase which refutes a dualist conception of spirit and matter and once more implies that Paulician dualism is only a mirage. In the second passage, the pastoral emphasis is similar but inexplicit; Sergios' invocation of Matthew 6.22 serves to understand himself as "the eye" of "the body of Christ,"

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82 *Treatise*, 11, p. 87. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 94; Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 22; 39, pp. 14–15; 20–21. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 69; 72.

83 1 Cor. 5:3; Col. 2:5.

84 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 161, pp. 60–61. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 87–88.

85 Matt. 6:22. Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 158, pp. 58–59. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 87.

but much of the underlying spiritual meaning is unarticulated because Sergios expects his followers to understand that they belong to this body. Rather than considering Christ's body an illusion, as Byzantine heresiologists alleged, Paulicians imbued it with an allegorical significance that had great significance for their communal sense of belonging, as is true of Paul's own writings. Here as elsewhere, Roman allegations are considerably wide of the mark.

In many respects, the above misreadings of Paulician ideas are egregious enough that it is difficult to take any Roman accusation of doctrinal error seriously unless there is corroborating evidence to substantiate it. The claim that they denied the sanctity of the Theotokos, for instance, seems untenable given that the rationale behind it is demonstrably false. Other claims, such as their supposed rejection of the eucharist and cross, are also questionable considering that their conception of "the body of Christ" is founded on 1 Corinthians, which champions both of these images of the divine.[86] I am equally sceptical that they rejected Peter or the prophets of the Old Covenant, particularly because their use of the Old Testament is now established, but it does seem probable that they found these witnesses much less authoritative than the Pauline Letters and Gospels, which were fundamental to their thinking.

All of this is not to say, however, that the Paulicians were perfectly conventional in their beliefs. The deeper we dig the more indications of heterodoxy and heteropraxy become apparent. This is most apparent in their understanding of the Holy Spirit, which once more attests a deep interest in Pauline texts. Any inquiry into the Paulicians' conception of the Holy Spirit necessarily begins with its most important expression: "the reception of the grace of the Spirit." As we have already seen, in the *Didaskalie* this phrase is central to the legitimacy of a *didaskalos*. In conventional theological understandings, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and inspires both the Church and individual Christians who have reached a requisite level of sanctification or purification.[87] Hence, "the grace of the Spirit" is often associated with important rites, such as baptism or salvation, as well as the spontaneous inspiration of prominent individuals, including apostles and prophets.[88] All of this is

86 1 Cor. 1:17–18; 10:16–17; 11:23–34.

87 For the example of Peter and Paul, see Basil of Caesarea, *Homilia 15: De fide*, 3, *Patrologia Graeca* 31, col. 469D. English translation: *On Christian Doctrine and Practice*, ed. and trans. Mark DelCogliano (Yonkers, 2012), p. 238.

88 For baptism, see Gregory of Nyssa, *De perfectione Christiana ad Olympium monachum*, in *Gregorii Nysseni opera*, ed. Werner W. Jaeger, 10 vols, vol. 8:1 (Leiden, 1952), p. 202, l. 6–14. English translation: *Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Ascetical Works*, ed. and trans. Virginia W. Callahan (Washington, D.C., 1967), p. 114. For salvation, see Gregory of Nyssa, *De instituto Christiano*, in *Gregorii Nysseni opera*, ed. Werner W. Jaeger, 10 vols, vol. 8:1 (Leiden,

broadly in keeping with the Paulician usage, but the latter also has a distinctly Pauline emphasis which stresses the participation of the ordinary believer in the divine. In fact, the terminology used by the Paulicians implies a complex borrowing from Pauline texts and contemporary theology. Grace and the Spirit are both important themes in Acts and the Pauline epistles, but they are never employed in combination.[89] A term related to grace, 'spiritual gifts' (*χάρισματα*), is used in conjunction with Spirit, but this combination never appears in our Paulician texts.[90] It therefore follows that the Paulician usage departs from that of Paul in some respects, but it still seems evident that his reading influenced them considerably. Notably, for example, Paulician texts are similar to Paul's works in that they generally refer to Spirit rather than the Holy Spirit.[91] The latter usage was rare in the early centuries of Christianity because differentiating the activity of the Holy Spirit from that of the Father and Son only became a point of acute theological concern from the First Council of Constantinople (381) onwards. As a result, even if the Paulicians' views are heavily dependent on Paul here, they also demonstrate influence or intercourse with contemporary Christian traditions.

The Paulicians did, however, depart from these traditions in important respects and this is particularly evident in their conception of an exclusivist or permanent indwelling of the Spirit. We have already seen that Gegnesios and Theodore remained in conflict until the end of their lives about which of them

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1952), p. 77, l. 9. English translation: *Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Ascetical Works*, ed. and trans. Virginia W. Callahan (Washington, D.C., 1967), p. 151. On the remission of sins, see Basil of Caesarea, *Basile de Césarée. Traité du Saint-Esprit*, 19:49, ed. Benoit Pruche (Paris, 1968), p. 420, l. 18–19. English translation: *On the Holy Spirit*, ed. and trans. David Anderson (Crestwood, 1980), p. 77. On prophecy, see John Chrysostom, *In principium Actorum*, 2, *Patrologia Graeca* 51, col. 96, l. 20–21. On reception of the Spirit, see Pseudo-Makarios, *Homilia 17*, in *Makarios/Symeon: Reden und Briefe*, 2:1, ed. Heinz Berthold, 2 vols, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1973), p. 189, l. 3–5; Pseudo-Makarios, *Homilia 49*, 6:5, vol. 2, p. 121, l. 17–20. English translation: *Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*, ed. and trans. George A. Maloney (New York, 1992), p. 452; Athanasios, *Orationes tres contra Arianos*, *Patrologia Graeca* 26, col. 273C. English translation: *The Orations of S. Athanasius against the Arians*, ed. and trans. William C.L. Bright (London, 1889), pp. 152–153; Basil of Caesarea, *Traité du Saint-Esprit*, 22:53, p. 442, l. 24–26. Translation: *On the Holy Spirit*, p. 84; Basil of Caesarea, *Traité du Saint-Esprit*, 26:11, p. 468, l. 16–19. Translation: *On the Holy Spirit*, p. 93.

89 Ludwig, "Wer hat was," p. 185.

90 Grace is generally considered as an attribute of the Godhead as a whole. Paul's letters emphasise *χάρισμα* (which can be loosely translated as spiritual gifts), which are considered manifestations of the Spirit. See Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Grand Rapids, 1994), pp. 32–35; 886–895.

91 Ludwig, "Wer hat was," p. 185.

had received "the grace of the Spirit," which implies that they believed it could only be true of one of them. The *Didaskalie*'s attribution of a Pauline name to the legitimate *didaskalos* surely underlies this exclusivist position, which restricts the activity of the Spirit solely to the *didaskalos*. This notion contravenes conventional theological perspectives, which allow that "the grace of the Spirit" may inspire any number of individuals at one time, or may join people together.[92] Since there are no indications in the *Didaskalie* that a *didaskalos* ever relinquished his grace, it also seems that the indwelling of the Spirit was considered permanent.[93] Peter of Sicily's accusation that Sergios claimed to be the Paraclete perhaps refers to just such a permanent assumption of the Spirit.[94] As the *Didaskalie* would have it, only a legitimate *didaskalos* could receive "the grace of the Spirit," which he would thereafter retain. The pressing question is whether we can trust the *Didaskalie* on this point since its central aim is to legitimate the *didaskalos*. It may simply be a case of Sergios coopting an existing Paulician idea for his own self-aggrandisement.

This, in fact, is indicated by isolated remarks in the *History of the Paulicians*. Peter of Sicily observes that Sergios' disciples pray using the phrase "Let the prayer of the Holy Spirit have mercy upon us" and even though Peter connects this with Sergios' reputed claim to be the Paraclete and therefore states they were praying to their teacher, it is also eminently plausible that they were seeking intercession directly from the Spirit.[95] The latter is suggested by the tenor of Pauline thought, which understands immersion in the Spirit as an integral part of membership in Pauline communities, since it unifies believers and orchestrates the free worship embraced within these traditions.[96] If Paulicians interpreted the intercession of the Spirit like this, then they surely believed that the Spirit dwelt within themselves, rather than just their *didaskalos*. In fact, Sergios' own words show this in his correspondence with the Church of

92 For the use of "the grace of the Spirit" in a communal sense, see Athanasios, *Epistula ad Marcellinum de interpretatione Psalmorum*, *Patrologia Graeca* 27, col. 20B. English translation: *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, ed. and trans. Robert C. Gregg (New York, 1980), pp. 107–108. Basil of Seleucia refers to it as an entity which unites the apostles. See Basil of Seleucia, *Homilia in sanctum Andream*, *Patrologia Graeca* 28, col. 1101–1104.

93 Basil of Caesarea understands "the grace of the Spirit" to always be present in a person, even if it is not necessarily in operation. See Basil of Caesarea, *Traité du Saint-Esprit*, 26:11, p. 468, l. 16–19. Translation: *On the Holy Spirit*, p. 93.

94 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 134; 156, pp. 52–53; 58–59. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 83; 87.

95 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 156, pp. 58–59. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 87.

96 Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. 870–895.

Koloneia noted above, where he states "I am with you in the Spirit," thereby suggesting that the latter inspired and connected all Paulicians, rather than inhering in him alone.[97] Immersion in the Spirit was therefore common to all adherents, but "the grace of the Spirit" seems to have been a more specific formulation which indicated a higher degree of sanctification associated with the greater piety and authority of the *didaskalos*. In most theological understandings, prophets and apostles only differ from ordinary believers in the extent to which they have received grace and it seems that for the Paulicians, the *didaskaloi* were numbered among the most hallowed of all. The most obvious conclusion resulting from this is that Paulician Christianity had a strong charismatic focus that proved a source of vitality and conflict. This conception is, needless to say, conspicuous in the *Didaskalie*, where the rivalry of spiritual leaders provides the motive force for conceptions of their past.

4 Paulician Customs, Worship, and Organisation

One of the most keenly felt frustrations of studying Romanía during our period is the dearth of information on the everyday life of provincials and non-elites. The Paulicians inevitably suffer from the same problem, but our sources still hold much of interest. The *Didaskalie*, for instance, holds incidental details that enrich our understanding of their customs, informing us that the *didaskaloi* did not have a markedly ascetic way of life.[98] We have already noted that both Gegnesios-Timothy and Joseph-Epaphroditos had children, so the *didaskaloi* could evidently procreate and presumably therefore marry, much like contemporary Byzantine clergy.[99] The same source notes that Paulicians raised livestock, which renders vegetarianism or any atypical dietary restrictions improbable. This should be as true for the *didaskaloi* as other Paulicians since there are no indications that the *didaskaloi* were subject to extra prohibitions as a result of their status. The higher echelons were not markedly different from the mass of believers, as the *Treatise* tells us: "They call their own priests *synekdemoi* and notaries: they are not distinguished from the others by dress or diet

97 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 161, pp. 60–61. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 87–88.

98 This has long been noted in secondary scholarship. See Dimitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge, 1948), p. 44.

99 See Peter L'Huillier, "The First Millennium: Marriage, Sexuality, and Priesthood," in *Vested in Grace: Priesthood and Marriage in the Christian East*, ed. Joseph J. Allen (Brookline, 2001), pp. 23–65.

or the rest of their manner of life."[100] The status and responsibilities associated with these offices are unknown, but it is notable that the *synekdemoi* (literally, companions or fellow travellers) were attached to a particular *didaskalos*, rather than a hierarchy as such, further confirming the charismatic nature of the movement.[101] On a different tack, there is little indication that Paulician family life was different from the norm. As we have seen, the *Didaskalie* does not consider heredity a compelling source of legitimacy, but the fact that this needed to be articulated suggests that parentage and status were still considered important within the social and cultural environments that Paulicians inhabited. It seems they preferred a less stratified conception of community and clerical authority than contemporaries, but this evidently had its problems, particularly where confessional stability was concerned.

On the basis of Pauline thought, we would expect Paulician communities to be centred primarily around the church as understood as a collective body of believers rather than a physical location, but the *Didaskalie* contradicts this somewhat and suggests a developed conception of sacred space. As we have seen, locales such as Episparis and Mananalis recur frequently in the text and were evidently of some importance. The same is true of Soros, the place outside Kibossa where Constantine-Silvanos and Symeon-Titos found martyrdom. The most revealing testimony for understanding Paulician ideas of space and community lies in Sergios' description of their churches, which is punctuated by Peter of Sicily's explanatory gloss:

> "Yet I say, Paul founded the church at Corinth, Silvanos and Titus the church at Macedonia" and by Macedonia he means the assembly at Kibossa, and he calls Constantine Silvanos and Symeon Titus. "Timothy taught the church of Achaea" and by Achaea he means Mananalis, and he names Gegnesios Timothy who was really 'Thumotheos'. "Epaphroditos ministered at the church of the Philippians" and he means by him Joseph the goatherd, born of fornication, who was really 'the Senseless'. He names his students the Philippians. "Tychikos taught the church of the Laodikaeans and Ephesians, and still yet that of the Kolossians" and by Kolossians he means the Argaoutes, by Ephesians those at Mopsuestia, and by Laodikaeans the dogs who inhabit the land of the dog [i.e., the

100 *Treatise*, 19, p. 90. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 95.

101 See the reference to Sergios' *synekdemoi*. Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 182–183, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 91. Paul's travelling companions Gaius and Aristarchus are called *synekdemoi* at Acts 19:29.

> *Kynochoritae*]. Concerning all these, it is said that the three are one and are taught by one, by Tychikos.[102]

The most notable feature of Sergios' genealogy is that it ties churches firmly to the *didaskaloi* that founded them. We have already seen above that in his letter to the Church of Koloneia he beseeches it to accept his authority, which implies that these churches were semi-autonomous. This hints that Paulician activity at this time is best characterised as a network of loosely connected nodes rather than a unified community, which helps explain why the authority of the *didaskalos* was more circumscribed and contested than we might initially expect. It perhaps also explains the centrality of missionary activity to the status of the *didaskaloi*, since founding their own churches would secure them a reliable power base. It is significant that Sergios uses the term church in the above passage, since the *Treatise* claims that Paulicians referred to their assemblies as 'places of prayer' (*προσευχαί*). The latter term connotes a less formalised place of worship, as we would expect given the tenor of Pauline thought and the Paulicians' mobility, but this usage of *προσευχαί* is rare in the New Testament, so it is unclear whence the Paulicians took the term if the *Treatise* attributes it to them correctly.[103] Given their peripatetic ways, it seems likely that they worshipped wherever they found themselves if they were on the move. Their lack of contact with the institutional church would not have been especially surprising in Asia Minor in any case, since private churches were common throughout Kappadokia and elsewhere in the peninsula.[104] In this respect as in others, their loosely knit organisation suggests a heterogeneous movement, which coheres well with the prominence of infighting in the *Didaskalie*.

One of the more interesting insights into Paulician lived religion lies in the observation that its practices were nowhere near as different from those of the institutional church as Byzantine invective would lead us to believe. The *Treatise* is the key source here, since, while claiming that the Paulicians contravened both established belief and praxis, it goes on to contradict many of these

102 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 163, pp. 60–61. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 88. For an equivalent passage in the *Treatise*, see *Treatise*, 7, p. 84. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 93–94.

103 *Treatise*, 15, p. 88. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 95. The usage is found at Acts 16:13, 16:16, but not in the Pauline letters.

104 J. Eric Cooper, Michael J. Decker, *Life and Society in Byzantine Cappadocia* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 154–158.

allegations, thereby suggesting that Paulician and Roman devotional practices were perhaps not so different after all. The following passages are illustrative:

> They also blaspheme the holy cross, saying 'Christ is the cross; it is not right to worship wood because it is a cursed tool.'[105]
>
> Some of them, when they fall sick or are in pain, place the cross on themselves, and when they are healthy again, they break the cross and throw it into the fire to be burnt, or trample it under foot.[106]
>
> They reject our priests and other members of our hierarchy. They call their own priests *synekdemoi* and notaries; they are not distinguished from the others by dress or diet or the rest of their manner of life.[107]
>
> Some of them even have their children baptised by our priests if they are prisoners among them. Others come secretly into our orthodox churches and receive the sacred mysteries to better deceive the simple.[108]

Quite how seriously we should take acts like the supposed destruction of the cross after the invalid's recovery is unclear, but it seems apparent here that Paulician and Roman spiritualities were not as mutually exclusive as the author of the *Treatise* would like. There are two ways to account for this; firstly, that the source is trying to justify accusations, such as the rejection of the cross, that were spurious in the first place. The contradictory tenor of these passages falls within a topos that pervades the *Treatise*, namely that the Paulicians conceal their heterodoxy by lying, speaking allegorically, and behaving as an orthodox believer would. In numerous cases, the document gives a Paulician allegory which supposedly articulates how they subscribed to the institutional church's creedal statements while surreptitiously contravening their meaning.[109] These deviations should not be accepted at face value, as whatever alleged mendacity exists here is just as likely to be Roman as Paulician. Secondly, the contradictions may reflect the notion that some believers did not perceive, or attributed negligible importance to, a distinction between orthodox and Paulician forms of worship, for the simple reason

105 *Treatise*, 13, p. 88. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 95.
106 *Treatise*, 22, p. 91. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 96.
107 *Treatise*, 19, p. 90. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 95.
108 *Treatise*, 23, p. 92. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 96.
109 *Treatise*, 9–13, pp. 85–88. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 94–95.

that they could identify as both Roman and Paulician, if they even recognized this distinction. As a result, they participated in both Byzantine and Paulician rites and gatherings. We have no means to address the pervasiveness of this notion and must suspect it varied widely depending on context given the violent and unpredictable reversals of Byzantine-Paulician relations. The predominant impression is that the *Treatise* is seeking to articulate boundaries where these have not yet been drawn and the same is probably true of the *Didaskalie*; both were, we must not forget, written during a pivotal period of Roman-Paulician conflict.

We may lack sufficient testimony to determine how different Paulician sacramental practices were to those of contemporary Byzantines, but the above remarks do contain some surprising emphases. It is peculiar to see baptism identified as a sacrament that Paulicians would accept from orthodox priests, since we might expect this to be the rite which differed most between the two, given the considerable emphasis that Paulicians placed on the Holy Spirit. If Paulicians did indeed bring their children to orthodox priests for baptism, it would at least demonstrate that they favoured infant baptism, but it would be unwise to maintain this while our evidence is so slight. The *Treatise* is rather fuller on the matter of the eucharist, alleging that the Paulicians considered bread and wine to be merely Christ's words at the Last Supper.[110] Meanwhile, it rationalises their supposed rejection of the cross by claiming that the Paulicians consider Christ himself to be the cross, designating the material counterpart to be an accursed tool.[111] These two allegations may conceivably have some historical foundation, but we cannot endorse the *Treatise*'s claims when the tenor of Pauline thought suggests that the Paulicians would have venerated these manifestations of the divine. As noted above, both are endorsed by Paul in 1 Corinthians. Paulicians almost certainly worshipped differently from other Romans, and the differences no doubt became more pronounced with time, but the specifics of their devotional practices unfortunately elude us. It is, however, notable that much of the above evidence suggests that Paulician and Roman lived religion was not irreconcilably different at this early stage in their interaction. This raises a possibility that will be pursued in the following chapters: that Paulician belief developed organically from within conventional forms of Christianity.

110 *Treatise*, 12, p. 87. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 94–95.

111 *Treatise*, 13, p. 88. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 95.

5 Paulician Hamartocentricism and Apocalyptic

Thus far we have seen that Paulician belief was founded upon a reverence for Paul and the apostolic period, rather than cosmological dualism and, although in many cases our sparse evidence has left us unable to determine points of doctrine and practice, we have been able to build a picture of an innovative, but troubled, movement preoccupied with schism from within and persecution from without. It is now time to plumb murkier waters and investigate several emphases that are expressed in our sources and are common in contemporary religious thought, but which cannot be straightforwardly applied to Paulician belief as a whole. These are two closely interrelated phenomena: firstly, the sense that, as a result of their sins, the Paulicians were responsible for their own sufferings (or, as I shall call it here, hamartocentricism); and secondly, tantalising indications that they were experimenting with apocalyptic thought. Both are difficult to interpret. Since they are minor emphases, the initial impression is of strands of thought which were only beginning to percolate into their belief systems or, alternatively, ideas that were coopted by the Sergiote party for its own ends. However, since apocalyptic and hamartocentric symbolism are often closely related to eschatology, which does not feature noticeably in the *Didaskalie* or *Letters of Sergios*, it may be that the Paulicians had longstanding ideas about their fate and that of the world, but these were expressed elsewhere.[112] Even if this is the case – and it is far from certain – we lack the evidence to posit how deep-rooted Paulician ideas about sin and revelation were, but it does seem that these aspects of their thought were evolving by the time of (and probably as a response to) the Byzantine persecutions.

The clearest indication that Paulician understandings of the world incorporated eschatological aspects is their conception of sin, which played a central role in many religious narratives of our period. In Christian contexts, sin was inextricably linked with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise, which we have already seen that Sergios invoked in order to bolster the faith and loyalty of his fellow Paulicians. Beyond this, many Near Eastern communities intrinsically linked the sins of their community with the evils inflicted upon it. Most pertinently to our context, Byzantine and other Christian authors interpreted the disasters of the 7th century, notably the successive invasions of the Sasanian Empire and the early Muslims, within a "biblical eschatology," which identified the Romans as the successors of the Jews as God's Chosen People,

112 On the distinction between apocalypticism and eschatology, see Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1998), pp. 1–36.

largely through readings of Old Testament texts. In doing so, they placed particular emphasis on the sins of the community, and more especially those of their leaders, while interpreting the empire's decline. Correct belief was connected to military success and hence the defeats of the 7th century were associated with the heterodoxy (generally Monothelite) of the emperors at that time.[113] In a similar vein, Leo V's restoration of iconoclasm was impelled by the popular conception that the empire's repeated defeats at the hands of the Bulgars signified God's displeasure.[114] An intriguingly similar connection between sin and a people's fate is evident in the *Didaskalie*.

In her pioneering study of this text, Ludwig made one crucial observation that she uncharacteristically did not follow up. She noted that almost all instances of persecution, by both Romans and Muslims, are intimately connected with disputes over the Paulician leadership, but attributed little wider importance to this.[115] In fact, this observation shows us that the text envisages persecution as a punishment for the Paulicians' sins. The sins in question are invariably connected with schism, which we have already seen was a concern that transcended the anxieties of the *Didaskalie* and its commissioner Sergios-Tychikos. Most conspicuously, the links between sin, schism, and persecution run through the plotline of the *Didaskalie* as recounted at the beginning of this chapter. As noted there, while Constantine-Silvanos taught at Kibossa he led a unified and harmonious community, free from schism. He then becomes subject to an imperial inquiry that Peter of Sicily is at a loss to explain, noting: "For the emperor, I do not know how he understood the affairs regarding him (Constantine-Silvanos) …"[116] In this instance, there is no link between persecution and the sins of the Paulician community, for the simple reason that the community is as yet sinless. Sin only conditions the narrative after Justos' stoning of his teacher and adoptive father Constantine. The momentous and transgressive nature of this act is signalled by two observations. Firstly, stoning is closely connected with sin in Christian traditions, most notably in John 8:7, while sin is by extension associated with the rejection of Paulician traditions in Sergios' exegesis of the respective sins of Adam and Cain.[117] Secondly,

113 John F. Haldon, *The Empire that Would Not Die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640–740* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), pp. 79–83.

114 Leslie Brubaker, John F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c.680–850: A History* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 366–370.

115 Ludwig, "Wer hat was," pp. 191–192.

116 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 103, pp. 42–43. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 78.

117 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 167, pp. 62–63. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 89.

when Symeon, who still is an imperial official at this point in the narrative, orders Constantine's students to stone their master, they refuse and instead cast their stones behind their backs, thereby leading him to single out Justos for the deed.[118] All of this signposts to the Paulician reader the gravity of Justos' act. Even Peter of Sicily seems to have heeded this: it bears emphasising that he notes his inability to explain how the emperor learnt of Constantine-Silvanos, thereby suggesting that he recognized the connection between schism and persecution in the rest of the narrative. In subsequent instances, he acknowledges the link.

This is apparent in the dispute between Symeon and Justos, where the familiar link between the actions of the *didaskalos* and the Paulicians' internal and external enemies is first explicated. The two rivals' disagreement over the passage Colossians 1:16–17 leads Justos to consult the Bishop of Koloneia, who refers the matter to Justinian II. The emperor then orders the Paulicians to be judged, sentencing those who do not repent to be burned, but the narrative implies that he would never have learnt of them had the dispute not broke out.[119] In this instance, the outcome for the Paulicians is disastrous, but the same pattern presents itself when the repercussions are more benign. Hence, Peter of Sicily observes that it is the quarrel between Gegnesios and Theodore which brings them to the attention of Leo III:

> There was a rift between the two brothers, that is Gegnesios and Theodore, one saying that he had received the divine grace of the Spirit, the other making this claim for himself. So they quarrelled among themselves and hated each other completely, and so the leaders of abomination remained to the end of their lives. When the emperor heard all this (at the time it was Leo the Isaurian), he sent for Gegnesios (who should be better called Thymotheos) and sent him to the patriarch of Constantinople.[120]

Again, it is an internal Paulician dispute which impels a Byzantine response, this time on the part of Leo III. There is no such link between schism and inquiry in the case of Joseph and Zacharias since the particulars of their

118 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 104, pp. 42–45. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 78.

119 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 111, pp. 46–47. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 79–80.

120 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 114, pp. 46–47. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 80. Thumotheos (he who angers God) is Peter of Sicily's pejorative for Gegnesios-Timothy.

dispute differ from the examples above. While disputing who should lead the Paulician community, Gegnesios' son Zacharias strikes the upstart Joseph with a stone, in a piece of symbolism which redresses the transgression of Justos' stoning of Constantine-Silvanos. It is difficult to substantiate this conclusively though, principally because the subsequent confrontation does not occur with a Roman official, but rather an Islamic army that happens upon both Joseph's and Zacharias' followers. It is not clear in our extant text whether the Muslims' interception of the Paulicians follows as a result of their schismatic impulses, as in the case of earlier Roman inquiries, but the fact that the Muslims intercept both groups suggests that the episode had some relevance to Paulician understandings of community. Since Joseph saves his followers from the Islamic threat while Zacharias abandons his, it might initially appear that Joseph would lead a community free from schism, particularly given the symbolism of his stoning. However, this is clearly not the case, since Joseph subsequently comes to be pursued by the Roman *archon* Krikoraches, who causes him to flee while capturing his followers.[121] In this instance, there is no indication that Krikoraches' actions proceeded from a Paulician dispute, so the relationship between sin and persecution is not apparent here either. Evidently, the *Didaskalie* did not reconcile the relationship between sin and persecution at the culmination of its narrative, but this is entirely appropriate considering the subsequent dispute between Sergios and Baanes.

As in the case of contemporary eschatological narratives, Byzantine or otherwise, the Paulician preoccupation with sin was therefore intimately entwined with ideas about the leadership, unity, and doctrinal orthodoxy of their community. In the Paulician case too, this hamartocentricism seems to have been intrinsically linked with their understanding of the fate of the world and their community's role in it. This much is apparent from scattered indications of apocalyptic symbolism within the *Letters of Sergios* and, more specifically, its author's subtly different standing in the ranks of the *didaskaloi* in his *Letters* compared to the *Didaskalie*. In an extract of the latter we have already examined, Sergios describes himself, his predecessors, and the foundation of the Paulician churches, in the process identifying the apostle Paul and the four *didaskaloi* Constantine-Silvanos, Symeon-Titos, Gegnesios-Timothy, and Joseph-Epaphroditos as his forebears. These founded four churches between them: Paul founded the Church of Corinth, Silvanos and Titos held sway over the Church of Macedonia, Timothy taught the Church of Achaea,

121 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 128, pp. 50–51. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 82.

and Epaphroditos ministered at the Church of the Philippians. By contrast, Sergios-Tychikos established three Paulician churches, those of the Kolossians, the Ephesians, and the Laodikaeans.[122] Consequently, he identifies himself as the sixth *didaskalos* who brought the number of churches to seven.[123]

This passage is of such interest due to the prominence of the number seven in apocalyptic narratives. The best known example is Revelation (or, to give it its Greek name, Apocalypse) and, although this book was rarely accepted as canonical in Byzantine ecclesiastical traditions, the same topos is found in other apocalyptic texts, most notably including the apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodios, which circulated widely in our period.[124] In fact, the importance of the number seven was not exclusively Christian; rather it was a parascriptural topos which pervaded apocalypticism throughout the Near East, including Islamic and Zoroastrian traditions.[125] In late 8th-century Khurāsān, for example, the veiled prophet al-Muqanna' conceived of himself as the seventh or eighth of God's prophets (the uncertainty stems from the ambiguous standing of the famous 'Abbāsid revolutionary Abū Muslim in his thought).[126] In our case, the importance attributed to the seven churches elsewhere implies that Sergios was looking to invoke apocalyptic symbolism by referencing them in this way, while his identification of himself as the sixth *didaskalos* offers the intriguing possibility that he conceived of his successor, the seventh *didaskalos*, as having an epochal role in Paulician history. This much is suggested by

122 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 163, pp. 60–61. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 88.

123 Note that the *Treatise* adopts a different reading. *Treatise*, 8, p. 85. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 94.

124 Pseudo-Methodios, *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius: An Alexandrian World Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Benjamin Garstad (Cambridge, MA, 2012), pp. 2–71. On the acceptance of *Revelation*, see Johannes Irmscher, Annemarie Weyl Carr, Alexander P. Kazhdan, "Apocalypse," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan, vol. 1 (New York/Oxford, 1991), p. 131. Note that some Byzantines did utilise the text, including Arethas of Caesarea in the 10th century. On this, see Tia M. Kolbaba, "Byzantine Orthodox Exegesis," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible. Volume 2, from 600 to 1450*, eds. Richard Marsden, Ann E. Matter (Cambridge, 2012), p. 489. Notably, the Paulician churches do not coincide with the Seven Churches of Asia invoked at Rev. 1:11.

125 András Kraft, "The Last Roman Emperor Topos in the Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition," *Byzantion* 82 (2012), p. 215; John C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Atlanta, 2005), pp. 17–24.

126 Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 128–130.

the fact that Sergios had no direct successor; this seventh *didaskalos* was perhaps a messianic or occulted figure, as in many such traditions.[127]

We are admittedly dabbling in speculation here, but the theory remains attractive insofar as it is based on Sergios' representation of himself. On initial impressions, the hypothesis seems to be fatally undermined by the *Didaskalie*, which only documents the activity of four *didaskaloi* and therefore contradicts Sergios' portrayal even though the source originated within his school. However, we have already seen that the *Didaskalie* incorporates traditions which predated and critiqued Sergios, so it perhaps follows that this apocalyptic imagery was a recent development that he sought to use for his legitimation. The evolution of Roman eschatology perhaps provides a clue here. Pivotally, the belief that the Romans were the new Chosen People only arose due to the disintegration of narratives which had previously explicated their thought-world.[128] It is easy to envisage a similar process occurring among the Paulicians after the persecutions of the 810s, particularly since they inform the *Didaskalie* so fundamentally.[129] Given the pervasiveness of eschatological explanation in contemporary societies, this development could even have occurred in popular strands of Paulician thought before being appropriated by the Sergiote party. In contrast to contemporary Byzantine eschatologies, which were founded upon Old Testament texts, Paulician explanations of the world were suffused with references to New Testament works, particularly Acts. They were therefore readily distinct from their Byzantine counterparts and could evolve in different directions. Nevertheless, even if all the above is accepted, we still have no indication of what Paulician eschatology comprised. This is a major stumbling block, but a potential outcome of the above merits discussion. One of the uglier facets of these Byzantine eschatologies is that they could logically lead to Jewish supersessionism, insofar as the Romans supplanted the Jews as God's

127 *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV invokes a similar messianic emphasis in the case of the Khurramite Theophobos, who was believed by his followers to have remained incorruptible after death. This has been linked to the Khurramite concept of an imamate. See Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur Libri I-IV*, 3:38, eds. J. Michael Featherstone, Juan Signes Codoñer (Boston/Berlin, 2015), pp. 194–197; Juan Signes Codoñer, *The Emperor Theophilos and the East, 829–842: Court and Frontier in Byzantium during the Last Phase of Iconoclasm* (Farnham, 2014), p. 141.

128 Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 18–22; Haldon, *The Empire*, pp. 79–80.

129 For the applicability of eschatological modes of explanation to peripheral and unruly areas, see James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland South East Asia* (New Haven/London, 2009), pp. 283–323. For an instructive example of messianism among the Mardaïtes/Jarājima, see Paul M. Cobb, *White Banners: Contention in 'Abbasid Syria, 750–880* (Albany, 2001), pp. 113–115.

Chosen People. If taken to its logical extreme, the *Didaskalie* could similarly imply Roman supersessionism because the Paulicians' Roman foes are characterised as brutal and arbitrary persecutors throughout. The *Treatise*'s allegation that the Paulicians "call themselves Christians and us Romans" surely attests an abnegation of Roman claims to sanctity at the same time as it extols Paulician belief.[130] Considering Sergios' pleas for fellow Paulicians not to take Roman prisoners, it seems probable that the most martial among them reached this logical extreme, although others evidently did not. We should not push this possibility too far, however. As we saw above, the *Treatise* suggests that some Paulicians still considered the boundary between the two identities porous in the middle of the 9th century. Undoubtedly, much depended on context and individual inclinations. Nevertheless, it is significant that Paulician belief had the capacity to evolve in more radical directions.

It is difficult to draw conclusions from material as intractable as this, but a few points stand out. The persecutions of the 810s clearly affected Paulician understandings of themselves and their place in the world in fundamental ways that can now be glimpsed only imperfectly. It seems certain that Paulician communities across the empire grappled with these tensions and explained them in new ways. The resulting ideas may then have been utilised by Sergios and his followers in the *Didaskalie*, but even if they invented these emphases themselves, it seems Sergios and other elites were reacting, often indecisively, to events during these troubled years rather than dictating them. Beyond this, it is notable that these apocalyptic traces are largely in agreement with contemporary thought, much like Sergios' exegetical methods and the conception of "the grace of the Spirit." Traditional approaches to the heresy have interpreted it as a fossilised remnant of belief systems codified in the 3rd century, so it bears reiterating here that their thought was both creative and well informed on recent developments. This vitality was, needless to say, crucial to the trailblazing path they would forge throughout the 9th century.

Just as it was not an ancient relic, however, Paulician belief was also not a harbinger of things to come. We have already seen that the dualist interpretation that sees them as forebears of the Bogomils and Cathars does not withstand scrutiny and the same is true of adoptionist readings. Early exponents of the adoptionist thesis, as well as others who have emphasised the Pauline character of Paulician belief, often characterised them as adherents of a primordial Christianity or reformers of the contemporary church, often with proto-Protestant emphases. This latter tendency is understandable

130 *Treatise,* 9, p. 85. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 94.

to some degree, given that the Paulicians hearkened back to the apostolic period and suffered heavy handed punishment by the prevailing church of the day, but it ought to be eschewed.[131] Early Protestant-oriented readings of the Paulicians privileged their religious purity over that of the Roman and Constantinopolitan churches and extolled their defence of a primitive Christianity against these churches or aggressors from other faiths, in some cases excising or obfuscating the uncomfortable circumstance that they frequently aligned themselves with Islamic polities.[132] Even as I write, I can imagine how the interpretation advanced herein could be subverted within modern analogues to these positions and this prospect is heinous enough to warrant curtailment at the outset.[133] We have seen above that the Paulicians' conception of the Holy Spirit, their veneration of charismatic *didaskaloi*, and their apocalyptic leanings mark them out as heterodox by the standards of ancients and moderns alike. It may be seductive to some, but any attempt to depict them as reformers or proto-Protestants necessarily neglects this and only replaces the ancient clerical teleology of dualism with a modern one.

6 Historical Implications

As we approach the historical chapters of this book, it seems appropriate to pause and reflect on the implications that this chapter has for our historical understanding of the Paulicians. The *Didaskalie* may not be historically accurate, but, despite this, it and the *Letters of Sergios* are still of prime importance for our understanding of the Paulicians in the early 9th century and, to a lesser extent, beforehand. For Ludwig, our Paulician sources only reliably described

131 Early exponents of this approach include Gieseler, Febvrel, and Conybeare. Johann C.L. Gieseler, "Untersuchen über die Geschichte der Paulikianer," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 2:1 (1829), pp. 79–80; Adrien Edmond Febvrel, *Des Pauliciens: Thèse presenté à la Faculté de Theologie protestante de Strasbourg* (Strasbourg, 1868), pp. 51–53; Frederick C. Conybeare, ed., *The Key of Truth. A Manual of the Paulician Church in Armenia* (Oxford, 1898), pp. lvi-lvii. The antiquity and simplicity of Paulician belief is also stressed in the works of Garsoïan. Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 151–230. Even Ludwig attributes a reformist character to them. See Ludwig, "The Paulicians," pp. 34–35.

132 See especially Conybeare, *The Key of Truth*, pp. lxxv; civ–cv.

133 The view that Armenian religiosity prefigured the Protestant Reformation is still promulgated by some Armenian churchmen in the USA. See, for instance, Charles A. Vertanes, "The Rise of the Paulician Movement in Armenia and Its Impact on Medieval Europe," *Journal of Armenian Studies* 2:2 (1985–86), pp. 3–27; Krikor Haleblian, "The Origins of Armenian Protestantism," in *Defending the Faith*, ed. Vartan Kasparian (Burbank, 2015), pp. 111–115.

the career of Sergios, although some events in Joseph's career also seemed credible to her.[134] Loos was slightly more positive in his appraisal, believing that the events described by the text provide convincing reasons for explaining the Paulicians' rise to prominence from the middle of the 8th century onward, largely as a result of his belief that the Paulicians made common cause with the iconoclasts.[135] As we shall soon see, there are reasons to doubt such an alliance, but, irrespective of this, everything we have seen thus far suggests that the *Didaskalie*'s historical memory is only reliable for one or two generations at the most. Notably, the career of Sergios' predecessor Joseph-Epaphroditos has been fully integrated into its symbolic framework, so evidently the source's propagandistic function and indebtedness to New Testament scriptures overrode any concern with historical accuracy. This, naturally, must be kept in mind while interpreting it. Still, it seems evident that Joseph-Epaphroditos was a historical figure, since Sergios' rival Baanes legitimated himself by claiming continuity with him and it is difficult to account for why Sergios would refer to an individual who called his own legitimacy into question unless Joseph's legacy remained important in his own day. The historicity of Joseph's supposed predecessors is rather more doubtful, but, despite this, some Paulicians seem to have considered them figures worthy of veneration for some time. It is, of course, unlikely that Sergios could have systematically reinvented the origin narrative of the community when he originally came from outside it. We saw above that while the first *didaskalos* Constantine-Silvanos prohibited the use of scriptures aside from the "Gospel and the Apostle," Sergios used other texts, including books of the Old Testament. In a similar vein, while Constantine would only teach orally, Sergios also spread his message through pastoral letters. It is difficult to conceive why Sergios would have admitted these facts unless it were necessary, which suggests that Constantine was popularly understood as the movement's founder.

Thus, although Paulician conceptions of their history may have been malleable – and they were certainly not as chronologically precise as those of contemporary Byzantines – it seems certain that semi-codified explanations of their origins were circulating before Sergios' career. The first event of certain historicity described in the *History of the Paulicians*, however, is Sergios' conflict with Baanes. In the *History*, this dispute endures even after Sergios' death, but it seems likely that its most important phase was confined to the years immediately after Sergios contested Baanes' authority, which presumably

134 Ludwig, "Wer hat was," p. 223.

135 Loos, "Le mouvement," p. 266.

occurred soon after Joseph's demise. The *History* gives us no indication of how the persecutions of Michael I and Leo V affected the conflict between Sergios and Baanes, if this was still a live issue at the time, but it is at least evident that this era saw no large-scale migration to Melitene, which occurred only in 843/44, as the Continuator states. As we have seen, the *Didaskalie* was composed in Greek and operates within a Roman thought-world, while its characterisation of Muslims is underdeveloped. This would hardly be the case if it were written soon after a Paulician flight to Muslim territory. Its narrative arc is one of stagnation rather than success and therefore shows no awareness that the Paulicians would grow progressively more prominent in the following decades.

In our analysis of legitimating mechanisms, we saw that it is unclear how an individual became a *didaskalos*, while the formal responsibilities associated with the title are similarly obscure. Despite this, the position had evidently been extant at least as long ago as Joseph-Epaphroditos and quite probably longer. If its particulars were really so indistinct in spite of this, it seems evident that the role had a strong charismatic focus that explains why challenges to accepted authority were so commonplace. Despite this, the difficulties that Sergios faced while attempting to legitimate himself suggest that conceptions of what a *didaskalos* (and probably also a Paulician in general) should be were already well developed by the turn of the 9th century. The *Didaskalie* would have us believe that cunning and an ability to protect the community were among the foremost desirable traits, but other Paulicians no doubt placed greater emphasis on personal piety and bravery.

In some respects, most notably in the frequent references to schism and disputed transmission of authority, our Paulician texts seem to represent the contradictions which naturally arise from an attempt to impose a clerical superstructure on a movement which originally developed without one. Sergios, who sought to minimise conflict with Romans and extolled his position to new heights, certainly stands out as the most obvious exponent of such an approach, even if such a development could conceivably have predated him. It bears emphasising here that although the primary impression of our texts is a divergence between Byzantine and Paulician norms caused by the violence of the former against the latter, contrasting emphases are also present. Most notably, Sergios' contravention of Constantine-Silvanos' command to only read "the Gospel and the Apostle" implies a convergence with the established church in scriptural norms as well as institutional practices. This could perhaps foretell a period when Roman attitudes to Paulicians were more favourable. Theophanes the Confessor claims that the emperor Nikephoros I (803–811) allowed Paulicians and Athinganoi to practice their faith openly and, while Theophanes' utter contempt for Nikephoros means that we should not accept

this at face value, it seems possible that Paulicians and Romans had coexisted more peaceably in the decades before the persecutions of the 810s.

In practice, the most difficult obstacle to investigating matters like these is that Paulicians are not mentioned in any extant Byzantine source before the *Chronographia* of Theophanes. Barring an unreliable reference in the reign of Constantine V, this text only refers to Paulicians from the reign of Nikephoros I onwards. Although this fact is valuable in showing us that the Paulicians only provoked significant interest from Romans from the turn of the 9th century, shortly before the advent of persecution against them, it gives us little indication of how they came to prominence in the 8th century. This matter will be tackled in the following chapter, but here I shall anticipate the conclusions presented there, by noting how conducive the *Didaskalie* is to a reading that sees the Paulicians as a constellation of identity phenomena that had only recently coalesced. In short, prior to the 9th century they are most convincingly conceptualised as a series of disjointed networks, rather than a monolithic community. Although the *Didaskalie* portrays them as an initially united movement that subdivided as a result of schisms, this portrayal mirrors a common topos in ecclesiological discourse where an expansionist church invokes the notion of primordial unity in order to uphold its position and appeal for others to acknowledge its preeminence. In practice, however, its origins were not necessarily older nor more revered than its competitors.[136] In a similar vein, it is eminently possible that early Paulician ideas arose in a variety of places in different forms before gradually coalescing into a more cohesive movement that Sergios sought to unite after the shared experience of Roman persecution fostered centripetal impulses. As we have seen, Paulician doctrines and praxes were not particularly different from provincial norms and may therefore have developed spontaneously from conventional forms of Christianity in Armenia and Asia Minor. It is natural to see the career of Sergios as a watershed at the culmination of this process of evolution considering that his authority was questioned and flouted by some. Although we lack sufficient testimony to prove it more conclusively, it seems most likely that Paulician communities converged, fragmented, and realigned throughout our period. The *Didaskalie* customarily portrays confessional choices as binary options between charismatic leaders, but we must suspect more complex dynamics were at play, including factors such as doctrine, practice, organisation, geography, and

136 The most famous exposition of this is the Bauer thesis, which interpreted the earliest heresies as indigenous forms of Christianity which developed prior to a notion of orthodoxy. See Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ed. and trans. Robert A. Kraft, Gerhard Krodel et. al. (Philadelphia, 1971).

historical antipathies between individuals and communities. Such a perspective best accounts for the continual anxiety that the *Didaskalie* and the *Letters of Sergios* show regarding schism and legitimate authority.

This reconstruction not only explains why not all Paulicians in the early 9th century were beholden to the authority of Sergios, it also suggests that opposition to him may have proceeded along several different axes and potentially explains why he did not have a like-for-like successor. Earlier scholarship has portrayed him as the most successful *didaskalos*, but our reconstruction implies he may have been merely their most effective propagandist. This impression is perhaps unfair: given the developments that occurred on his watch, he may have been contending with forces that could not realistically be contained. Although the shared experience of persecution proved to be a unifying factor, centrifugal forces were also at play, particularly among those who opposed Sergios' methods and took reprisals against the empire. As we have seen, his career may also have been situated at an eschatologically pivotal juncture. The suspicion, however, remains that the problems Sergios faced may have led to the abeyance of the role of the *didaskalos*. At the very least, the composers of the *Didaskalie* could not ride roughshod over preexisting conceptions of what a *didaskalos* should be. This is a boon from our perspective, since it means that although our Paulician texts would have us believe that affairs were dominated by the disagreements of elites, they reveal that Paulician adherents and communities wielded substantial influence in practice. Although the *Didaskalie* never explicitly acknowledges it, it was the acclaim of ordinary Paulicians who decided the relative success of Sergios and Baanes. Our sources suggest that Sergios was ultimately the more successful of the two, but his position was still undermined by his pacific ways. This portrayal of a spirited, but fractious, movement evolving in the face of persecution will retain vital prominence in the analysis of Paulician history in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 4

Paulicians in the 8th Century: The Genesis of a Heresy *c.*750–800

Whether by means of persecution, rebellion, or warfare, the 9th century saw dramatic changes in the lived experience of Paulician communities as the militarised insurgence they metamorphosed into became one of the Byzantine Empire's most threatening enemies. This trajectory appears even more exceptional when we note the almost total lack of reference to them before the century's advent. They only appear in connection with two events during the 8th century and both of these are described in 9th-century sources which betray signs of anachronism and rhetorical flourish. 8th-century sources, which are admittedly thin on the ground, do not refer to Paulicians whatsoever. The *Didaskalie* and *Letters of Sergios*, which are not historically reliable, offer little assistance in addressing this lacuna, although the broader trends that animate these texts, notably their portrayal of a fractious community directed by charismatic leaders, can be usefully applied to earlier periods of Paulician history. As a consequence of the above, there is a paucity of evidence for explaining why the Paulicians rose to prominence within the empire. One explanation has traditionally predominated above all others: that their growth was due to a de-facto alliance with Byzantine iconoclasts, including the oft-reviled Constantine v. In the opening salvo of this chapter, we shall see that the evidence for such an alliance cannot endure critical scrutiny. Furthermore, in the previous chapter we saw that the Paulicians were neither adoptionists nor dualists, but instead founded their beliefs and practices upon a reverence for the apostle Paul and, as such, espoused doctrines and sentiments familiar to provincials in Asia Minor. This raises the possibility of explaining the rapid expansion of their influence by the development of an indigenous Christianity attuned to Asia Minor and Armenia, rather than marking the resurgence or reconfiguration of a long moribund heresy. By adopting this position here, I argue that early Paulician communities arose through multidirectional negotiations of identity in frontier regions whose complexity undermines the conceptual utility of ostensibly axiomatic designations such as Roman or Armenian.

Explaining a process as complicated as this risks becoming overwrought at times, so there is some merit to laying my cards on the table at the outset. Numerous historians have sought to determine which Paul is the eponymous figure who gave the Paulicians their name, without any clear consensus

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emerging.[1] This approach is, in my view, misguided. We have already seen that the name of the Paulicians is contested. Roman writers sought to pin an association with Paul, son of Kallinike, or Paul the Armenian upon them, whereas it seems abundantly clear that their primary spiritual authority was Paul the apostle. It thus appears that their name does not reflect a self-evident association with one individual or another, but is rather a product of labelling and reappropriation in which Paulicians and others contested their respective sanctities and identities.[2] Insofar as the label Paulician is Armenian in origin, it follows that these exchanges originated in western Armenia and eastern Asia Minor among Armenian speakers, in which a minority labelled as 'Paulicians' emphasised their veneration of the apostle Paul in order to emphasise their religious credentials. This process would reach its full realisation in a community whose leaders adopted Pauline names, founded Pauline churches, and wrote Pauline letters. At the turn of the 9th century, this Pauline Christianity had become so successful that it came to the attention of Byzantine authorities, whose subsequent persecution of its adherents resulted in the production of the *Didaskalie*, whose witness testifies to the Pauline nature of their belief. This, in a nutshell, is how I think a dynamic Paulician faith originated in Asia Minor. Quite why it spread so quickly is a matter of debate. Although identity mediation between Armenian actors was crucial in the Paulicians' formative years, they clearly remained a minority, probably an unpopular one, among Armenian communities. At various stages of their ascendancy, it seems that militarism, pastoralism, and anti-institutional sentiment played a part in their success, but it also seems that provincial Asia Minor was ripe for a charismatic vision of Christianity that placed the Pauline churches and the preaching of the Gospel in the present.[3]

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1 Milan Loos, "Deux contributions à l'histoire des Pauliciens. II: Origine du nom des Pauliciens," *Byzantinoslavica* 18 (1957), pp. 202–217; Karen B. Yuzbašyan, "De l'origine du nom «Pauliciens»," *Revue des études arméniennes* 9 (1972), pp. 355–377; Hratch M. Bartikian, "Encore un fois sur l'origine du nom Pauliciens," *Revue des études arméniennes* 9 (1972), pp. 445–451.

2 Albeit implicitly, Ludwig too suggests that the origins of Paulician identity stemmed from interaction with others, noting that the Paulicians "saw themselves as Byzantines" and that the "segregation of the group as a distinct heretical sect is a Constantinopolitan construct." Claudia Ludwig, "The Paulicians and Ninth-Century Byzantine Thought," in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?*, ed. Leslie Brubaker (Aldershot, 1998), p. 23.

3 See also Carl Dixon, "Between East Rome and Armenia: Paulician Ethnogenesis *c.*780–850," in *Transmitting and Circulating the Late Antique and Byzantine Worlds*, eds. Mirela Ivanova, Hugh Jeffery (Leiden, 2020), pp. 251–273.

This interpretation – and, more fundamentally, the approach underlying it – contradicts that of generations of scholarship and, accordingly, it will be necessary to justify this position at length, focusing particularly on grounding it in the social, cultural, religious, and economic contexts of the area. Given the limitations of our evidence for this period, certain specifics must remain up for debate, but in pursuing this approach I hope to at least show that Paulician identity was too multifaceted to be reduced to a particular ethnic designation or socio-economic niche; rather, it was able to adapt itself to new conditions precisely because it was attuned to some, but by no means all, aspects of provincial life and, as a result, instilled a strong sense of community in its adherents. This interpretation goes some way to explaining the tenacity with which Paulician communities in Thrace held to their identity when transplanted by Byzantine authorities in later periods. Equally, however, we must not overstate the transformative potentialities of Paulician religion. Despite their successes, the Paulicians clearly remained a minority who invoked distrust among others. Before we explain their success and notoriety, their apostolic doctrines and martial ardour, we must first dispel perhaps the most misleading topos found in prior scholarship: that is, the de-facto alliance between Paulicians and iconoclasts.

1 Paulicians and the Iconomachy

The Paulician-iconoclast alliance has a long tradition in scholarship. It was first adduced in the late 19th century by Ter Mkrttschian and Conybeare, whose interpretations were conditioned by a romanticised characterisation of the Paulicians as doctrinally pure, militaristic Christians who challenged the decadent Orthodox church with their characteristically Armenian form of iconoclasm.[4] That the reality may be more complex than this was hinted at by Grégoire, who observed that neither Peter of Sicily's *History* nor the *Letter* of Theophylaktos Lekapenos levelled accusations of iconoclasm at the Paulicians. He therefore determined that the allegation of iconoclasm postdated the latter

4 See Karapet Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer im byzantinischen Kaiserreiche und verwandte ketzerische Erscheinungen in Armenien* (Leipzig, 1893), pp. 112–117; Frederick C. Conybeare, ed., *The Key of Truth. A Manual of the Paulician Church in Armenia* (Oxford, 1898), pp. xxxvi; xlviii; lxxiii–lxxv. See also Tiran Nersoyan, "The Paulicians," *The Eastern Churches Quarterly* 12 (1944), pp. 403–412. For Armenian Paulicians and iconoclasm, see also Paul J. Alexander, "An Ascetic Sect of Iconoclasts in Seventh Century Armenia," in *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.*, ed. Kurt Weitzmann (Princeton, 1955), p. 159.

text, but his observation went unheeded and the old interpretation endured.[5] By the middle of the 20th century, the strength of the alliance had been downgraded, with the likes of Milan Loos and Leslie Barnard stressing the distinctiveness of iconoclasts and Paulicians, whose common cause they attributed to similar anti-clerical impulses.[6] Garsoïan, by contrast, saw a closer link between these groups, arguing that the dualist Paulicians she considered a distinctly Byzantine phenomenon derived their beliefs from iconoclasm.[7] Only Lemerle dissented from the consensus position after Grégoire, considering any connection between the two movements fleeting and superficial, but, perhaps because he did not treat the matter systematically, his view was rarely heeded subsequently.[8]

On first impressions, there are good reasons to uphold the thesis of a Paulician-iconoclast alliance which underlies many of these analyses. Paulicians are associated with iconoclasts in numerous secondary sources, including Theophanes' *Chronographia*, George the Monk's *Chronicon*, and the *Third Antirrhetikos* of Patriarch Nikephoros I. However, a closer reading of these sources shows that rather than positing an alliance between the two movements, these authors rhetorically compared Paulicians and iconoclasts in order to defame the latter. Other criticisms of the alliance are more serious. The most notable is a trend which runs throughout our sources: while the historiographical texts noted above do link Paulicians and iconoclasts, even if the links are late and indirect, heresiological and epistolary sources give a rather different picture. We have already seen in Chapter 1 that the *Treatise*, the oldest surviving text against the Paulicians, was written by an iconoclast, which certainly does not suggest common cause between the two. Moreover, as Grégoire pointed out, the *History of the Paulicians* does not accuse the

5 Henri Grégoire, "Autour des Pauliciens," *Byzantion* 11 (1936), pp. 613–614; Henri Grégoire, "Communication sur les Pauliciens," *Atti del V Congreso Internazionale di Studi Bizantini*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1939), pp. 176–177. For Grégoire, there is no indication that the Paulicians were iconoclasts during the period 668–872. He seems not to have considered historiographical sources, which do associate Paulicians with iconoclasm prior to the 10th century. These will be addressed below.

6 Milan Loos, "Le mouvement paulicien à Byzance," *Byzantinoslavica* 24 (1963), pp. 267–276; Leslie W. Barnard, "The Paulicians and Iconoclasm," in *Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, eds. Anthony Bryer, Judith Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), pp. 75–82.

7 Nina G. Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy. A Reinterpretation," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 25 (1971), pp. 97–105.

8 Paul Lemerle, "L'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure d'après les sources grecques," *Travaux et mémoires* 5 (1973), pp. 76–77; 80; 130. For instance, Barnard cites Lemerle's study, but does not note his view on this matter.

Paulicians of rejecting images and the same is true of the *Brief History*.[9] In fact, with the exception of Photios' letters to Chrysocheir, Byzantine sources do not accuse Paulicians of iconoclasm until the abjuration formulae of the mid-10th century.[10] Contemporary evidence that Paulicians favoured iconoclasm is essentially non-existent, whereas our sources have abundant testimony for iconoclast hostility towards them. After his adoption of iconoclasm, Leo V persecuted Paulicians as zealously as his iconodule predecessor Michael I and their punishment is similarly attested by the *Vita Macarii Peleketae* during the reign of the last iconoclast emperor Theophilos. Throughout our sources, the overriding impression is that iconoclasts opposed Paulicians just as vehemently as iconodules did.

The best way of demonstrating this fact is to address the relevant episodes recounted by our historiographical sources thematically, focusing on two recurring motifs: first, the association of Paulicians with Constantine V; and second, the invocation of the term 'Paulician' to rhetorically question the Christian credentials of an individual or group.[11] Both are apparent in the first Byzantine source to mention Paulicians: the *Chronographia* of Theophanes. Aside from Nikephoros' *Third Antirrhetikos*, it is the only Roman text to refer to Paulicians during the 8th century. It is somewhat surprising to see this in Nikephoros' case, since his *Breviarum*, a text written in the 780s or 790s, does not allude to Paulicians at all, but Nikephoros was still a layman at the time of its composition.[12] From the 810s onward, two important observations unite our authors: both Theophanes and Nikephoros resisted the restoration of iconoclasm and both endorsed the persecution of Paulicians in the 810s. In fact, our sources indicate that Nikephoros instigated the first round of persecutions during the reign of Michael I. These observations go some way to explaining

9 Grégoire, "Communication sur les Pauliciens," pp. 176–177.

10 Even Photios' letters do not necessarily imply a close relationship with iconoclasm, since he also attempts to dissuade Chrysocheir from Miaphysitism, Monoenergism, Monotheletism, and earlier heresies. His understanding of Chrysocheir's beliefs seems patchy at best. See Photios, *Epistulae*, in *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, *Ep.* 33–38, eds. Basil Laourdas, Leendert G. Westerink, 6. vols, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1983), pp. 86–88. For the mid-10th-century sources, see *Abjuration Formula III*, ed. and trans. Jean Gouillard, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 200–201, l. 35; pp. 202–203, l. 81–85. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), pp. 106–108; *Abjuration Formula* IV, pp. 202–203, l. 8. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 108–110.

11 Martin proposed long ago that Theophanes uses the term 'Paulician' polemically. See Edward J. Martin, *A History of the Iconoclastic Controversy* (New York/Toronto, 1930), pp. 275–278.

12 Cyril Mango. ed., *Short History* (Washington, D.C., 1990), pp. 11–12.

the hostility of these authors to both groups and their readiness to assimilate them. We turn first to the *Chronographia*, whose importance to Roman understandings of Paulicians at the turn of the 9th century is so great that it will form the nexus of our account here. The extant text was codified during the latter part of 814, shortly after Michael I had been deposed but before Leo V had restored iconoclasm and restarted persecution of the Paulicians.[13] Unsurprisingly given Theophanes' attitude to persecution, the text betrays a pronounced distaste for Paulicians, especially from the reign of Nikephoros I onward. It contains only one reference to them beforehand, which is the first such allusion in any Byzantine source. The events in question are relocations of Paulicians to Thrace from Melitene in 750 and Theodosiopolis in 754/55, that is, during the reign of the infamous iconoclast emperor Constantine V.[14] The *Chronographia* reads: "The Emperor Constantine transferred to Thrace the Syrians and Armenians whom he had brought from Theodosiopolis and Melitene and, through them, the heresy of the Paulicians spread about."[15]

Although the extract seemingly refers to a single event, the *Chronographia* elsewhere makes clear that the campaigns against these cities took place in different years, which is hardly surprising given the distance between them.[16] For our purposes here, the passage provides an example of our first polemical device, the association of Paulicians and Constantine. It does

13 Cyril Mango, Roger Scott, eds., *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor* (Oxford, 1997), pp. lvii; lxi-lxii. Mango argued that the majority of first-hand observations in the *Chronographia* for this period originated with George Synkellos, rather than Theophanes. I shall not address this matter here. Cyril Mango, "Who Wrote the Chronicle of Theophanes?," *Zborknik radova Vizantinoškog instituta* 18 (1978), pp. 14–17.

14 See also Basil Lourié, "Syrian and Armenian Christianity in Northern Macedonia from the Middle of the Eighth to the Middle of the Ninth Century," *Materialy po arheologii i istorii antičnogo i srednevekovogo Kryma* 10 (2018), pp. 464–473.

15 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, ed. Carl de Boor, 2 vols, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1883), p. 429, l. 19–20. English translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, eds. and trans. Cyril Mango, Roger Scott (Oxford, 1997), p. 593. On this migration, see also Łewond, *History of Łewond, the Eminent Vardapet of the Armenians*, 29, ed. and trans. Zaven Arzoumanian (Wynnewood, 1982), pp. 123–124.

16 Ralph-Johannes Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber: Studien zur Strukturwandlung des byzantinischen Staates im 7. und 8. Jhd.* (Munich, 1976), pp. 164–165; Warren T. Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, 1997), pp. 359–362. See Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 427, l. 14–16. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 590; Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 493, l. 19–22. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 593; Michael the Syrian, *The Syriac Chronicle of Michael Rabo (the Great): A Universal History from the Creation*, 11:24–25, ed. and trans. Matti Moosa (Teaneck, 2014), pp. 510; 512–513.

not necessarily indicate the de-facto alliance favoured by prior scholarship because relocations of this kind are often informed by a complex concatenation of factors that cannot straightforwardly be reduced to benevolent or hostile intentions.[17] More importantly, there are indications that this event has no relevance to the Paulicians whatsoever, since the relocations are mentioned in other sources without any reference to them. Before discussing the passage fully, it is important to examine an earlier relocation of populations by Constantine, with which the above events are sometimes confused.[18] This earlier relocation took place after Constantine's campaigns in northern Syria in 746, after which he also relocated Christians to Thrace.[19] These events are related by Nikephoros' *Breviarum*, the *Chronographia*, and George the Monk's *Chronicon*.[20] Nikephoros only mentions the campaign, but Theophanes and George, who follows Theophanes closely, both mention Constantine's relocation of the populace and link this to the spread of Miaphysite belief in the area. Thus, we have an earlier analogue for our event, which our sources associate with the spread of Miaphysitism.

As for the later relocations from Melitene and Theodosiopolis, although Theophanes links these events to the subsequent spread of the Paulicians, this interpretation is not corroborated by Nikephoros or George. Nikephoros' *Breviarum* is particularly interesting here, since it shares a common source with the *Chronographia* for the period 668–769, thereby covering both episodes with which we are concerned here.[21] Unlike the relocation of 746, the *Breviarum* notes that the 754/55 campaign was followed by a relocation of the local populace, but Nikephoros does not associate this with religious deviance.[22] It is therefore probable that Theophanes has developed a topos linking

17 Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, "Aristocrats, Mercenaries, Clergymen and Refugees: Deliberate and Forced Mobility of Armenians in the Early Medieval Mediterranean (6th to 11th Century A.D.)," in *Migration Histories of the Medieval Afroeurasian Transition Zone*, eds. Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, Lucian Reinfandt, Yannis Stouraitis (Leiden, 2020), pp. 333–338.

18 Barnard, for instance, confuses the two events. Leslie W. Barnard, *The Graeco-Roman and Oriental Background of the Iconoclastic Controversy* (Leiden, 1974), p. 109. The same is true of Martin, who favours a Miaphysite identification of these heretics. See Martin, *Iconoclastic Controversy*, p. 277.

19 Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion*, p. 164.

20 Nikephoros, *Short History*, 70, pp. 142–143; George the Monk, 34, *Georgii Monachi chronicon*, ed. Carl de Boor, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1904), p. 752, l. 12–17; Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 422, l. 11–18. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 584. For the date of the *Breviarum*, see Paul J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople: Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1958), p. 162; Mango, ed., Nikephoros, *Short History*, pp. 8–12.

21 Mango, Scott, eds., *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, vol. 1, p. liv.

22 Nikephoros, *Short History*, 73, pp. 144–145.

Constantine V's forced migrations with heresy, since the second relocation is not associated with the spread of heresy by Nikephoros and therefore presumably the common source. Such a polemical topos is comprehensible given the many forms of invective hurled at Constantine and the fact that Paulicians were a matter of acute concern when the *Chronographia* was composed.[23] But the critical point is that later authors did not follow the *Chronographia*'s identification of Paulicians. George the Monk's account of the relocations differs markedly and does not mention heresy.[24] More notably, the *Chronicon* of Symeon the Logothete, whose first recension perhaps dates to the late 940s, adopts a different interpretation.[25] Symeon has assimilated the two migrations noted here into a single event, but claims that the relocated heretics "hold fast to the heresy of the tyrant," that is, Constantine V.[26] For Symeon, therefore, the heretics are iconoclasts. Michael the Syrian, by contrast, considers the heretics Miaphysites, as does Nikephoros' *Third Antirrhetikos*, which identifies them as "Armenian and Syrian Christians."[27] The Armenian historian Łewond, meanwhile, treats the affair as a voluntary migration of the Miaphysite populace.[28] In summary, only the *Chronographia* associates the migrations of 750 and 754/55 with Paulician activity. This identification is questionable because there are other indications of anachronism in the *Chronographia*, notably in its 7th century reference to themata.[29] The association of Constantine and the Paulicians therefore most probably arose in the 810s, when the *Chronographia* was composed and, more importantly, when Paulicians were persecuted. Even historians who have maintained Paulician links with iconoclasm have not found the Paulician identification of this passage persuasive.[30]

Despite the complexities of Theophanes' claim, it does hold one observation of some importance for us, namely that when he was writing in the 810s Paulicians were associated with Theodosiopolis and Melitene and had some

23 For the proposition that polemic directed at Constantine originally took several forms, see Paul Speck, *Ich bin's nicht, Kaiser Konstantin ist es gewesen* (Bonn, 1990), pp. 139–190.

24 George the Monk, *Chronicon*, 34, vol. 2, p. 763, l. 14–18.

25 Dating the various recensions of the *Chronicon* is a troublesome endeavour. See Staffan Wahlgren, ed., *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae chronicon* (Berlin/New York, 2006), pp. 5*–8*.

26 Symeon the Logothete, *Chronicon*, 122:5, p. 190, l. 77–83.

27 Michael the Syrian, *The Syriac Chronicle*, 11:25, p. 513; Nikephoros, *Third Antirrhetikos*, 72, *Patrologia Graeca* 100, col. 507–510.

28 Łewond, *History of Łewond*, 29, pp. 123–124.

29 John F. Haldon, *The Empire that Would Not Die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640–740* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), pp. 267–268.

30 Barnard, *Graeco-Roman and Oriental Background*, p. 109.

presence in the Balkans. Since the first reliable reference to their presence at Melitene elsewhere dates to the 840s, this testimony is important. Still, the passage does not provide reliable evidence of Paulician activity during the 8th century. The next reference to Paulicians in the *Chronographia* dates to Nikephoros I's reign and, therefore, the above interpretation undermines the link between the Paulicians and Constantine V. A passage in the *Chronicon* of George the Monk shows more conclusively that the association between the two is polemical. The excerpt refers to Constantine V's alleged repudiation of the Theotokos. The version quoted below comes from the second, revised version of the *Chronicon*, which dates to the last third of the 9th century:[31]

> In this manner he said that even Mary (for the impious man was not worthy to call her Theotokos) began to be honoured when she held Christ within herself, but after she bore him she was not different from other women. Alas for the daring abuse of the Saracen-believing and Jewish-minded! For he was not a Christian – let it not be so! – but a Paulician, to speak more truly and more fittingly, an idolater, servant of demons, and devotee of human sacrifice.[32]

This passage is emblematic of our concerns here because as well as connecting Constantine and the Paulicians, it also illustrates our second polemical usage of the term Paulician: juxtaposing it with a deviant Christian identity, generally an iconoclast one, to imply that the Christians involved are so far from orthodoxy as to invite comparisons with dualist heretics.[33] This is the essential meaning of this passage, which certainly does not state that Constantine was a Paulician or, for that matter, a worshipper of demons. Critically, this polemical association arose during the third quarter of the 9th century, that is, the zenith of Paulician militarism, since the first recension of the *Chronicon* (*c.*846/47) characterises Constantine in a different manner:[34]

> … for he was not a Christian, but a worshipper of gold, to speak more truly and more fittingly, an idolater …[35]

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31 Following the dating advocated in Dmitri Afinogenov, "The Date of Georgios Monachos Reconsidered," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 92 (1999), pp. 438–441.

32 George the Monk, *Chronicon*, 34, vol. 2, p. 751, l. 13–20.

33 See also Martin, *Iconoclastic Controversy*, pp. 276–277.

34 Dmitri Afinogenov, "Le manuscrit grec *Coislin*. 305: la version primitive de la *Chronique* de Georges le Moine," *Revue de études byzantines* 62:1 (2004), p. 246.

35 George the Monk, *Chronicon*, 34, vol. 2, p. 751, l. 18–19 (apparatus).

As in the case of Theophanes above, the polemical identification associating Constantine with the Paulicians is not contemporary, but arose in a period when the latter posed a geopolitical menace and were subject to severe punishments. A final example from the *Chronographia* pertains to a similar context and, in so doing, combines the two polemical tropes we have examined thus far.

Sandwiched between Theophanes' account of the preparations for the battle of Versinikia, where the Bulgar Khan Krum decisively defeated Michael I, and his terse description of the battle's outcome, he recounts that a group of iconoclasts broke into the tomb of Constantine V and entreated the long-dead iconoclast emperor to save the faltering empire. Loos and Barnard considered this episode of particular importance, since in their view it suggested that Paulicians and iconoclasts were distinct groups yet held shared interests.[36] The passage reads as follows:

> In the City, while the people and patriarch were performing a litany in the church of the Holy Apostles, some impious members of the foul heresy of the God-hated Constantine prised up the door of the imperial mausoleum (no one was paying any attention because the throng was so thick) and made it open suddenly with some kind of noise as if by a divine miracle. They then rushed in and fell before the deceiver's tomb, calling on him and not on God, crying out "Arise and help the State that is perishing!" They spread the rumour that Constantine had arisen on his horse and was setting out to fight the Bulgarians – he who dwells in Hell in the company of demons! The City prefect arrested those men and at first they lied, pretending that the doors of the mausoleum had opened automatically by God's will. But when they had been brought before the prefect's tribunal and failed to produce witnesses, they admitted the stratagem of the wrenching before any torture had been applied to them. The prefect had them suitably 'wrenched' and condemned them to be paraded in public and to cry aloud the reason for their punishment … Most of those who uttered such blasphemies were Christians only in semblance, but in truth were Paulicians who, unable to make manifest their own loathsome doctrines, seduced the ignorant by this device, extolling the Jewish-minded Constantine as a prophet and victor …[37]

36 Loos, "Le mouvement," pp. 275–276; Barnard, "Paulicians and Iconoclasm," p. 79.

37 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 501, l. 3–25. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 684–685.

Above all else, this extract expresses the pervasiveness of iconoclast sentiments within Constantinople at the time, particularly because it was written before the restoration of iconoclasm and therefore without the benefit of hindsight. As for the episode itself, the participation of Paulicians is doubtful since they are only referred to after the event and its repercussions are recounted. As in the example from George the Monk above, they are juxtaposed with iconoclasts to emphasise the latter's heterodoxy and undermine their claims to religious authority. Contrary to Loos and Barnard, there are no indications that the two groups are distinct actors. Instead, it seems that Theophanes conceives of heterodoxy in an amorphous fashion, which is perhaps not unsurprising given the dangers the empire faced at the time and the popular opposition to icon veneration. His fixation on the dangers of conspiratorial heterodoxy is apparent from other references in the text. An earlier plot to replace Michael I with the surviving sons of Constantine V is blamed on the "Paulicians and Athinganoi, Iconoclasts and Tetradites" and Michael's predecessor Nikephoros I is smeared by association with the Paulicians and Athinganoi.[38] There is little reason to believe that Theophanes is being precise when he refers to Paulicians, or other heretics for that matter.

There is an elephant in the room while discussing Theophanes' conception of the Paulicians: their contemporary persecution during the reign of Michael I and Theophanes' endorsement of it. When understood in this context, his account of the affair of Constantine's tomb assumes a more insidious reading. As the Paulicians were considered worthy of the death penalty, identifying iconoclasts as Paulicians could justify inflicting harsher punishments upon them. Since the above event occurred at the end of Michael's reign, when the persecution of the Paulicians had been halted, such a justification does not necessarily apply in this instance. It is, however, sobering that blurring the lines between the two groups could be used to justify the persecution of iconoclasts. There is little indication that such an approach was systematically pursued as policy, since if it were we would hardly expect to see Paulicians

38 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 496, l. 8–16. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 679; Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 488, l. 22–25. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 671. The term 'Tetradites' refers to those whose belief was thought to imply a Godhead of four persons. It was most often applied to those with a heterodox understanding of the crucifixion, such as Theopaschites, Julianists, and the followers of Peter the Fuller, Bishop of Antioch. To the opponents of these groups, their teaching implied that the crucified Christ was essentially a fourth person. See William H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement* (London, 1972), pp. 167–168; Krikor Haleblian, "Heresy and Orthodoxy in the Armenian Church," *Exchange* 31:1 (2002), p. 60.

persecuted again immediately after the restoration of iconoclasm, yet this is precisely what happened. In this instance, it seems that while polemical association was used relatively freely in rhetorical terms, in practice the authorities drew a firmer distinction between dissident groups.[39] This may not have been true in all cases, however, and for this reason we should not rule out limited persecution of iconoclasts on this basis, particularly from the 840s onward when polemic against iconoclasts and Paulicians began to converge.[40]

Somewhat surprisingly, a persistent concern of associating Paulicians and iconoclasts does not arise as readily in the work of Patriarch Nikephoros I, but this may be because his own treatise against the Paulicians, which both Theophanes and Nikephoros' own *vita* credit with inspiring their persecution, does not now survive. Only one reference to Paulicians survives within his extant works and this employs the same coincidence of iconoclasts, Paulicians, and punishment beloved of Theophanes. The passage is found in his *Third Antirrhetikos*, which Paul Alexander has dated *c.*818–820.[41] The stated aim of this source is to recount the main scriptural arguments for icon veneration, but it also incorporates a section of historical and polemical material. Speck doubted whether this material was original to the source, but he concluded that, even if it were interpolated, it was probably written by Nikephoros.[42] As such, it merits our attention here. The relevant passage states that after the Second Council of Nikaea (787) many iconoclasts became Manichaeans; the habitual term for Paulicians in sources of this period. The council is placed within a loose framework of historical events, including the plague of Constantine V's reign. Nikephoros describes these events to counter the popular opinion that iconoclasts enjoyed divine favour.[43] He then proceeds to state:

> For a short time beforehand, when [Eirene], who was known for piety, ruled the empire and demonstrated inspired and praiseworthy zeal on behalf of our belief, God awakened the spirit and with a divinely inspired vote [the iconoclasts] were fairly and auspiciously banished from this

39 See also John Arnold, "Persecution and Power in Medieval Europe: The Formation of a Persecuting Society, by R.I. Moore," *The American Historical Review* 123:1 (2018), pp. 169–170.

40 For the view that iconodules did not persecute iconoclasts, see Paul J. Alexander, "Religious Persecution and Resistance in the Byzantine Empire of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Methods and Justifications," *Speculum* 52:2 (1977), p. 244.

41 For this work and related texts, such as the first and second *Antirrhetikoi* and the *Apologetikos Major*, see Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus*, pp. 167–173.

42 Speck, *Ich bin's nicht,* pp. 553–556. If the material is indeed interpolated, it was presumably added before Nikephoros' death in 828.

43 Nikephoros, *Third Antirrhetikos*, 65, col. 496–497.

> city, the city in which they had settled impiously and wickedly at the behest of the one who had gathered them. Wandering around like planets, they began to strive for a religion in which visible icons and memorials of the ministry of Christ were not exhibited, and so they discovered the faithless and godless thing vomited forth from the many – I mean that of the Manichaeans. They were in accord with their doctrines, entrusted their belief to them, and proclaimed things which were enjoyed and rejoiced at long ago. At any rate, because of these things the majority of them abjured our confession entirely and delivered themselves wholly into this madness. Some of them were discovered among these and paid the ultimate price, which the laws commanded, and were given over to the sword.[44]

The reference to capital punishment in this extract can only refer to the persecutions instigated by Nikephoros himself, since we know of no other contemporary persecution of Paulicians, or indeed Manichaeans. Almost twenty-five years elapsed between these events and Nikaea II, so chronological precision is hardly the text's focus. Be that as it may, the passage implies that the Paulicians only became a significant concern after 787, as the *Chronographia*'s testimony also suggests. Most notably, the reference to iconoclasts "wandering around like planets" before "the majority" discovered Manichaean belief implies that the Paulicians only came to prominence sometime after Nikaea II. Such a period of wandering does not suggest a preexisting alliance between iconoclasts and Paulicians and, insofar as the latter's persecution was revived by the iconoclast emperors, any common cause between the two must have been short lived. Besides this, it is notable that Nikephoros only states that the Paulicians did not display icons, which implies that they had no interest in or made no use of them, rather than that they overtly rejected them. This is in keeping with the tenor of debate early in the 9th century, when iconoclasts predominantly focused on removing images from places of improper prominence, not rejecting them wholesale or destroying them.

Having now dispensed with the sources that are conventionally used to suggest common cause between Paulicians and iconoclasts, we can see that the evidence for an alliance of any sort is extremely slim. Although our sources do associate the two groups, these associations arise after the fact, almost exclusively as a means to discredit iconoclasts by comparing them to a heresy most Romans considered beyond the pale. Tellingly, most references between the

44 Nikephoros, *Third Antirrhetikos*, 68, col. 501.

two groups occur when punishment is invoked. The combination of polemic and punishment is mirrored in the reinvention of the Paulicians we saw in the mid-10th century, although in this earlier case the impact on the historical record is much less pronounced. All of this tells us little about how the Paulicians engaged with the iconomachy in practice. The answer to this, I think, is a reasonably simple one: iconoclasts and iconodules had little interest in the Paulicians' views about images and the Paulicians were indifferent to developments in a hierarchical church whose ethos was inimical to theirs. Although iconodule opposition to Paulicians is often considered self-evident, it is worth pointing out that the iconoclast preoccupation with circumscribing the sources of spiritual authority also renders it hostile to Paulician norms.[45] While the sources tell us very little about how Paulicians considered iconoclasts and iconodules, the evidence is much fuller for how these groups positioned the Paulicians within their own thought-worlds. We have already seen that iconodules emphasised the heterodoxy of their iconoclast opponents by comparing them to Paulicians. We lack the sources to confirm it, but iconoclasts may well have used a similar approach in turn. Besides such polemical tactics, both groups also invoked the Paulicians in a more subtle way: by conjuring the spectre of these heretics in order to contain the religious tensions associated with images by deflecting attention towards a common enemy. There is no more cogent expression of this stratagem than the coincidence of the persecution of the Paulicians with the iconomachy's most turbulent years, that is, the restoration of iconoclasm by Leo V in 815 and the Triumph of Orthodoxy in 843. If this concern with restraining the tensions of the iconomachy is only implicit in what we have seen thus far, it comes to the fore in an extract which describes one such period of crisis.

The source in question is the *Vita Nicetae Medicii* and its setting is Leo V's attempt to persuade recalcitrant bishops to support his policy of reimposing iconoclasm. For an iconodule source, Leo's portrayal is relatively favourable: he follows a conciliatory policy and implies that he will only resort to more forceful measures if absolutely necessary.[46] This suggests that the source, which dates before 844/45, is a credible witness.[47] In the course of the debate, the iconophile bishop Peter of Nikaea complains to the emperor that his power is

45 Leslie Brubaker, John F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–85: A History* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 182–184; 234–247; 366–385; 392–404.

46 *Vita Nicetae Medicii*, 34–35, in *Acta Sanctorum*, April I, p. 262.

47 Leslie Brubaker, John F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–85: The Sources* (Aldershot, 2001), p. 222.

so great that even if he allied with the Manichaeans – that is, the Paulicians – they would be victorious as a result of his support:

> Then Peter, the Bishop of Nikaea, said: "Whatever can you say that will lead us to speak with [the iconoclasts], while you fight with them and on their behalf? Do you fail to realise that even if you brought forward Manichaeans to speak, if you wished to fight on their behalf, would we be bested or aided by you?" It was not without reason that the most saintly Peter said: "Whenever power is combined with impiety, truth succumbs to necessity and equality toils under tyranny."[48]

The bishop's words here are emblematic of the practice of rhetorically invoking the Paulicians to delimit the tensions of the iconomachy. By associating Leo with the heterodoxy which was assumed to be most dangerous at this time, he attacks Leo's behaviour and expresses the helplessness of his own position. But his *reductio ad absurdum* shows that he could not countenance an alliance between Leo and the Paulicians in reality, which is hardly surprising given that the emperor reimposed persecutions against them at around this time. As in the other examples discussed above, when the Paulicians are mentioned in the context of the iconomachy, it is the latter which is the focus of our authors' concern. Our heretics are invoked as a point of comparison whose flagrant heterodoxy in the imagination of iconodules and iconoclasts alike rendered it subject to the most severe punishments. It is sobering to think that in another period, when discontent was not so rife, their beliefs may not have been so misunderstood.

2 The Armenian Connection

Given the observations offered above, an alliance between Paulicians and iconoclasts cannot sufficiently explain the rise of the former in the 8th century. A new explanation is needed. As stated at the outset, I believe the answer lies in the crystallisation of a shared socio-religious identity through dialectical interactions and labelling processes between many different actors in eastern Asia Minor and Armenia. This marks a sea change from earlier reconstructions, whose emphasis on the importation of Paulician doctrines from Armenia to the

48 *Vita Nicetae Medicii*, 35, p. 262.

empire has rarely implied the possibility of evolution or transformation.[49] The Armenian connection to Paulician identity is undeniable: the word Paulician has a recognisably Armenian root and is attested in Armenian sources beforehand, while Byzantine sources consistently locate Paulicians within Armenia and neighbouring provinces of the empire. Finally, the second half of the 8th century, which logically marks the period when the Paulicians began their growth to prominence within the empire, saw a period of consistent migration from Armenia and other regions to the east. However, Armenian sources do not document the apostolic elements of Paulician belief covered in the last chapter and they also do not agree with the dualist accusations of the Greek sources. Besides interpretations derived from the suspect *Key of Truth*, little focus has been paid to the Armenian sources at all. It therefore seems that we are dealing with a more complicated phenomenon than the mere importation of a belief system across the Anti-Taurus Mountains.

Even if a direct doctrinal relationship is jettisoned, the geographical basis of Paulician settlement still suggests a strong connection with Armenia. The *Didaskalie* locates the earliest phases of Paulician activity at Mananalis, Kibossa, and Episparis. The location of the latter is open to dispute, but the first two lie close to the main migration routes from Armenia to the empire. Mananalis is not a site, although it is habitually treated as such in Byzantine sources, but a district, located in western Armenia, south-west of the major city of Theodosiopolis, which Theophanes associated with the Paulicians when he was writing in the early 9th century.[50] Migration from Theodosiopolis to the empire is well attested in our period. A notable case is the flight of Armenians following the unsuccessful rebellions of 747–750, after which many went on to serve in Byzantine armies.[51] As we saw earlier, Miaphysites were also transferred from Theodosiopolis to Thrace by Constantine V *c.*754/55. To the northwest of Theodosiopolis are the main mountain passes from Armenia into the empire and, more specifically, the Lykos valley. The major settlement in the upper reaches of this valley is Koloneia, outside which lies the *kastron*

49 Garsoïan's thesis of a distinctly Byzantine and dualist subdivision of the Paulicians is the notable exception. See Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy: A Reinterpretation," pp. 85–113.

50 On Mananalis, see Nina G. Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy* (Paris/The Hague, 1967), pp. 71–72, especially notes 164 and 165; Anthony Bryer, "Excursus on Mananalis, Samosata of Armenia and Paulician Geography," in *Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, eds. Anthony Bryer, Judith Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), p. 83.

51 Aram Ter Ghewondyan, *The Arab Emirates in Bagratid Armenia*, trans. Nina G. Garsoïan (Lisbon, 1976), p. 33.

of Kibossa, where the *Didaskalie* places the first two Paulician *didaskaloi*.[52] Koloneia was located at the intersection of important road networks and was ideally situated for travelling southward into the interior of the Anatolian plateau, while following the Lykos downstream leads to the fertile grain growing lands of Paphlagonia.[53] This area was well connected with Constantinople via Black Sea ports such as Amisos and Sinope.[54] According to the *Treatise*, it also marks the location of Episparis, which the source places in the plain of Phanaroia; a broad tract of agricultural land to the east of Amaseia.[55] This identification seems a little dubious since Episparis fulfils the role of a refuge from both Roman and Islamic aggression in the *Didaskalie* and therefore might more logically be placed in an inaccessible location between Kibossa and Mananalis.[56] Be that as it may, for most of our period, all of the above sites (with the exception of Mananalis) lay within the Armeniakon province

52 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 101, pp. 42–43. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 77–78. See also the reference to Koloneia in version *Γ* of the 42 martyrs. Michael, Monk and Synkellos, "De XLII martyribus Amoriensibus narrationes et carmina sacra," in *Zapiski Imperatorskoĭ akademīi nauk po Istoriko-filologicheskomu otdĭelenīīu. Mémoires de l'Académie impériale des sciences de St.-Pétersbourg. Classe historico-philologique. VIIIe série* 7:2, eds. Vasily G. Vasil'evsky, Petr V. Nikitin (1905), p. 27.

53 Anthony Bryer, David Winfield, *The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C., 1985), p. 46. In the midst of an otherwise incisive critique, Kaldellis, quoting the *De thematibus*, notes that Constantine VII wrote that Koloneia was a particular locus of Armenian settlement during the emperor's own time. Extrapolating from this, he then argues that Koloneia was the exception rather than the rule, but this is questionable because most of the relevant passage is not concerned with its present ethnic composition and is instead antiquarian in nature, focusing on the etymology of provinces and place names. Immediately after this reference to Koloneia, for instance, Constantine writes of Amaseia and Dazimon being populated by the long-vanished "White Syrians." Tracing the "Armenian" component in a population induces methodological difficulties, as will become apparent below. See Anthony Kaldellis, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA/London, 2019), pp. 177; 214–215; Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De thematibus. Introduzione – testo critico – commento*, 2, ed. Agostino Pertusi (Vatican City, 1952), pp. 63–65.

54 Haldon, *The Empire*, pp. 240–246.

55 *Treatise*, 2, ed. and trans. Charles Astruc, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), p. 80. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 93; Henri Grégoire, "Précisions géographiques et chronologiques sur les Pauliciens," *Académie Royale de Belgique, Bulletin Classe des Lettres* 5e série, 33 (1947), pp. 294–296.

56 The *Treatise*'s testimony is doubtful here because it links Episparis with the Paulicians via Paul and John, the sons of Kallinike, whom the Paulicians openly anathematised. On the problems associated with Episparis, see Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 51–52; 64–65; 68; Henri Grégoire, "Pour l'histoire des églises pauliciennes καινοχώριον du Pont, Episparis en φανάροια," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 13 (1947), pp. 513–514.

or thema, which by the Paulicians' heyday had been subdivided into *kleisourae* such as Charsianon, Koloneia, and Chaldia, many of which gained thematic status during the latter half of the 9th century, thereby leaving a rump Armeniakon on the Black Sea coast.[57] The extent of Armenian settlement in the area has been a source of dispute recently, but it is at least clear that the name of the Armeniakon does not straightforwardly derive from the reputed Armenian presence, which may still have been noticeable despite traditionally being overstated.[58] In any case, substantial Armenian influence on, or participation in, the early Paulicians seems secure.

While the influx of Armenians had bolstered the empire's provincial population for centuries, it appears that the trend was accelerating throughout the 8th century as a result of a harsher tax regime and increasing Islamicisation within Armenia, especially during the second half of the century.[59] The flight following the suppression of the 747–750 revolt noted above fits this pattern, as do the similar movements which occurred after the 774–775 rebellion.[60] In the same vein, the Armenian historian Łewond describes the exodus of over twelve thousand Armenians under Shapuh Amatunik' from Ayrarat province, west of Dvin, to Hamshen, east of Trebizond, in 789–790.[61] Large-scale migrations such as these have traditionally attracted the attention of historians, but continual low-level inflow may have been more significant in bolstering the

57 Note that this was a complex process whose fiscal-administrative and military facets did not always align. On this, see Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 665–771. For *kleisourai* in the east and their eventual assumption of thematic status, see Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 758–760. For the connection between the Paulicians and the Armeniakon, see *Treatise*, 2, p. 80. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 93; Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 176, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 90.

58 Kaldellis has recently (and rightly) exposed the proclivity of some scholars to see Armenian identity as omnipresent in Byzantine society, particularly in instances where invocations of Armenian ancestry assume an explanatory logic all of their own. On this, see Kaldellis, *Romanland*, pp. 155–195. For more traditional views, see Nina G. Garsoïan, "The Problem of Armenian Integration into the Byzantine Empire," in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, eds. Hélène Ahrweiler, Angeliki E. Laiou (Washington, D.C., 1998), pp. 53–124; Peter Charanis, "The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire," *Byzantinoslavica* 22 (1961), pp. 196–240. On the Armeniakon thema, see Kaldellis, *Romanland*, pp. 176–177; Garsoïan, "The Problem of Armenian Integration," pp. 53–56; Charanis, "The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire," pp. 203–206.

59 Loos, "Le mouvement paulicien," p. 265. On migration from Armenia more generally during this period, see Preiser-Kapeller "Aristocrats, Mercenaries, Clergymen," pp. 327–384.

60 Ter Ghewondyan, *The Arab Emirates*, pp. 32–33; Mark Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium 600–1025* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 213.

61 Łewond, *History of Łewond*, 42, p. 149.

empire's Armenian population in the long run. In most cases, the predominant motive for flight was to escape retribution from Muslim authorities. The *Didaskalie* suggests that the same predilection motivated the Paulicians and in their case this expedient seems to have been successful. Koloneia, for instance, was well protected from the depredations of Islamic raiding, which rarely targeted this defensible locale.[62] During the 8th century, most Islamic raids were launched through the Kilikian Gates (and, less frequently, from Melitene) and targeted Kappadokia and the Anatolikon. While the western stretches of the Armeniakon, notably the cities of Paphlagonia, were common targets, and hence some centres with a significant Armenian population were in harm's way, the sites favoured by Paulicians were safer still. They may have been less lucrative, although the relative proximity of Paulician centres to large provincial centres and migration routes suggest that economic motives were not wholly absent.

Paulician attempts to distance themselves from Muslim intervention seem typical of regional practices, but there are also indications that they had an uneasy relationship with their fellow migrants and non-Islamic authorities. Their tendency to locate themselves in marginal areas suggests this, but the best indicator is the heretical Armenian label applied to them, which implies that they were regarded suspiciously, or shunned altogether, by other Armenians. This bears emphasising here, since some scholars have erroneously considered Armenians and Paulicians identical in our period, although medieval writers clearly distinguished between the two.[63] To add to the difficulties of identification, references to Armenians in Greek sources rarely give any indication of the political, confessional, and cultural differences which made Armenia

62 A notable exception is an attack by Yazīd b. Usayd al-Sulamī, the Ostikan of Armīniya, in 778. See Bryer, Winfield, *The Byzantine Monuments*, vol. 1, pp. 145–146; 167; Łewond, *History of Łewond*, 38, p. 142.

63 As Garsoïan notes of Anna Komnene, although it should be observed that Anna still assumes a reasonably close relationship between Armenian and Paulician identities in the relevant passage. On this, see Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy," p. 91; Anna Komnene, *Annae Comnenae Alexias*, 14:8, eds. Diether R. Reinsch, Athanasios Kambylis (Berlin/New York, 2001), pp. 454–458. English translation: *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth A.S. Dawes (London, 1928), pp. 383–387. For the unwarranted assimilation of Armenians and Paulicians, see Hratch M. Bartikian, "Armenia and Armenians in the Byzantine Epic," in *Digenes Akrites: New Approaches to Byzantine Heroic Poetry*, eds. Roderick Beating, David Ricks (Aldershot, 1993), pp. 86–92. Seta Dadoyan also equates the "Armenians" described by Michael the Syrian straightforwardly with Paulicians. Seta B. Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians: Cultural and Political Interaction in the Near East* (Leiden, 1997), p. 43; Michael the Syrian, *The Syriac Chronicle*, 11:17, p. 490.

so fractious in practice.[64] Contemporary Armenian sources, however, reveal internal divisions within migrating bands. On occasion, the Paulicians have been associated with the inauspiciously named "sons of sinfulness," who appear in connection with the Armenian revolt of 747–750 in the *History of Łewond*.[65] The most relevant passage describes the flight of Armenian *nakharars* rebelling against Islamic rule to the province of Tayk', which lay in northwestern Armenia close to the Black Sea. Upon fleeing to this area, these rebels encountered the "sons of sinfulness" and incorporated them into their army. Łewond's characterisation of this group is not internally consistent, so it is not apparent if they are heretics, as commonly assumed, or merely bandits:

> Then all the sons of sinfulness came and joined the army of the rebels; they knew neither the fear of God nor did they acknowledge the dread of the princes, or respect for the elders. As foreigners and estranged people, they spread their raids, seized their brothers and their compatriots, and pillaged greatly, bringing suffering on their brothers through beatings and tortures.[66]

Quite how this unscrupulous band were both foreign to the country and brothers to its inhabitants is unclear. Łewond's term cannot, however, designate a distinct grouping, since he elsewhere refers to other "sons of sinfulness," such as those who participated in the Muslim general Suleiman's invasion of Vaspurakan in 762, whom he notes were from Persia.[67] While the evidence adduced here warns against identifying the "sons of sinfulness" as Paulicians, it is significant that militarised bands of ill-repute were active in regions of Armenia that bordered the empire. More crucially, the passage suggests that migration from the Caucasus was heterogeneous and included groups that some held in low esteem.

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64 The issues are considerable, especially in older scholarship. A recent overview of the primary sources and historical issues is given by Redgate, but this does not address the difficulties of secondary scholarship. Kaldellis' recent critique proves valuable in this regard. See Anne E. Redgate, "Myth and Reality: Armenian Identity in the Early Middle Ages," *National Identities* 9:4 (2007), pp. 281–306; Kaldellis, *Romanland*, pp. 155–195.

65 Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 136–137.

66 Łewond, *History of Łewond*, 26, pp. 120; 180 n. 6. For the background to this source, see Tim W. Greenwood, "A Reassessment of the History of Łewond," *Le Muséon* 125 (2012), pp. 99–167.

67 Łewond, *History of Łewond*, 30, p. 124. See also Łewond's description of invading troops as "sons of sinfulness and descendants of iniquity." Łewond, *History of Łewond*, 5, p. 56.

The Paulicians fit within this pattern to some degree, but the portrayal of the "sons of sinfulness" most resembles Paulician activity during the zenith of their military success in the second half of the 9th century, rather than that described in the *Didaskalie*. In this text, the Paulicians do not seek conflict with others, but are rather conditioned by a strategic disposition to avoid unwanted oversight or interference. Their movements are neither permanent nor unidirectional, in contrast with some of their contemporaries. When Armenian elites migrated to the empire, they sought close contact with imperial institutions and the status and rewards these might provide, but Paulicians moved back and forth between their safe havens whenever they came to the authorities' attention. Admittedly, there are instances in which Armenian elites returned to their homeland when shifts in the political landscape were amenable, so population movements could be swiftly reversed in some instances.[68] Evidently, migration was a complex phenomenon. The essential difference between the above cases and that of the Paulicians is that the latter seem to have had a more troubled relationship with central authority from the outset. In the *Didaskalie*, of course, Byzantine authorities are portrayed as the Paulicians' most frequent foes. The historical basis of this might rightly be questioned, since this emphasis probably stems from its codification in the aftermath of the persecutions of Michael I and Leo V, but the trajectory of Paulician history as a whole implies a distrust and hostility toward authority. Despite this, their relationship with Byzantine provincials and other Greek speakers is harder to assess. In contrast with much of what we have seen above, where the earliest phases of Paulician activity are most easily reconciled with a reclusive and well-defined community, our sources also betray signs of complex ethno-cultural interaction between Romans and Paulicians.

Above all, as Garsoïan has shown, the personal names of Paulicians within our sources disclaim the notion that the movement is essentially Armenian in character, since Armenian names do not preponderate over Greek ones.[69] In fact, the *Didaskalie* implies a mixed Graeco-Armenian ethno-linguistic composition both within and without its community throughout the duration of its narrative, as is unsurprising in a setting where many may have been multilingual. Three of the principal Paulician figures, Paul the Armenian, his son Gegnesios, and Baanes, the rival of Sergios, are explicitly identified as Armenians, but the fact that they are described as such probably owes more to Byzantine norms of identification than Paulician ones.[70]

68 Łewond, *History of Łewond*, 10, pp. 64–66.

69 Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy," pp. 91–92.

70 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 112; 130, pp. 46–47; 50–51. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 80; 83; *Treatise*, 5, p. 82. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 93.

Armenian names are also attested among those who opposed the movement, such as Joseph-Epaphroditos's pursuer, the *archon* Krikoraches.[71] The same pattern applies when we identify Greek names, which are also prominent within the movement and outside it. Ultimately, Garsoïan concluded that while the Paulicians originated in Armenia, the Armenian character of the movement subsequently declined, especially from the career of Sergios-Tychikos onward.[72] There is perhaps some truth in this, but matters are probably more nuanced than a sequential transition from an Armenian to Roman character. For instance, the Islamic author Qudāma b. Ja'far, while writing of the end of the Paulician presence on the Anti-Taurus, characterises them as Romans whose departure created a vacuum later to be filled by Armenians.[73] Clearly, there are differences of perspective at play here, but the suspicion remains that conventional ethnonyms cannot adequately convey the ethno-cultural complexity of the region. Interaction between Greek and Armenian speakers, for instance, need not necessarily be confined to the empire because the former were also present in Armenia to the east. Finally, engagement is not solely reducible to Roman-Armenian interactions since migrants from elsewhere in the Caucasus were also active in areas where we find Paulicians.

That ideas of Paulician community had broadened out to transcend ethnic and linguistic distinctions is not especially surprising when we consider that Paulician belief resembled conventional forms of Christianity. Since the *Didaskalie* is very much a product of its time, we cannot posit that its Pauline Christianity or its reappropriation of Acts had reached their full development by the late 8th century, but it certainly seems that the apostolic core of the Paulician faith was close to provincial Christianity at this time and could therefore attract adherents among the populace of the borderlands. Besides this, it is notable that the locations where Byzantines identified Paulicians mirror the logic of the imperial system well. Paulicians are first attested around the major passes from Armenia and then into the Lykos Valley and the ports of the Armeniakon, whence they spread towards Constantinople. Whether this dynamic reflects the migratory patterns of Paulicians, the transmission of their ideas via proselytization, or merely the norms of identification utilised by the Roman state is unclear. It does, however, suggest that commercial routes were

71 Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 68.

72 Garsoïan, "The Problem of Armenian Integration," pp. 87–88.

73 Qudāma b. Ja'far, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa-ṣinā' at al-kitāba*, partial translation in *Bibliotheca geographorum Arabicorum*, vol. 6, ed. and trans. Michael Jan de Goeje (Leiden, 1870), p. 194.

important to the expansion of the movement before the turn of the 9th century. It is unlikely that Paulician communities had yet become a significant presence along the Anti-Taurus, since our sources only place them in this area in the 810s at the earliest. This matter will be examined in full in the following chapter.

For now, it suffices to note that Paulician identity transcended distinctions between Armenian and Greek speakers. Most probably, linguistic distinctions such as these were arbitrary in the social contexts that Paulicians inhabited anyway. Besides such ethno-linguistic concerns, several puzzling inconsistencies have become apparent in the character of the movement. Most conspicuously, the *Didaskalie* suggests a reclusive community who sought to distance themselves from others, and the heretical label that was applied to them implies a distaste for them among other provincials, yet the swift expansion of their faith implies widespread and successful engagement with neighbouring communities. Paradoxes such as this one are not surprising given that our evidence often comes from widely different perspectives, but it also implies that we may be dealing with a loose network whose internal contradictions are best explained by the convergence of similar phenomenon which originally developed independently within subtly different contexts. This hypothesis fits perfectly with the frontier society that our Paulicians inhabited during their formative period.

3 The Byzantine-Islamic Frontier in the Long 8th Century

The enduring image of the Paulicians which arises from our sources, irrespective of whether it stems from the *History of the Paulicians*, *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV, or their faint echoes in *Digenis Akritis*, is of a people on the very periphery of the Byzantine world. Although Theophanes and others locate Paulician dissidents within the heart of the empire, during our period their locale of choice was in the inaccessible and unruly frontiers straddling the empire's eastern themata, as well as the Armenian principalities and Islamic emirates which held sway along the mountainous crescent from Tarsus on the shores of the Mediterranean to Theodosiopolis in the Caucasus. The topography and climate of the area mark it as a geographical periphery that inhibits control by outside powers, but, besides this, the space was also a cultural frontier where Roman, Armenian, Arab (and, more debatably, Christian and Muslim) ideas interpenetrated. Such areas have long been recognized as quintessential sites for the evolution of new communal identities, which often

transcend distinctions between culture, religion, and ethnicity.[74] It is perfectly natural that this area would stimulate the evolution of Paulician beliefs and practices that were attuned to it; rather more noteworthy is that they could spread and thrive elsewhere. Explaining their success here will necessitate discussing the social, economic, and cultural makeup of the region, as well as the conceptual models that best apply to it.

On a regional level, the primary conditioning factor is the warfare and raiding that had characterised Asia Minor ever since Muslim armies had driven Byzantine forces from Syria in the reign of Herakleios.[75] In the case of the Roman side of the frontier at least, the impact of raiding has traditionally been considered severe, such that the notion of a no-man's land preponderates in scholarship. This no-man's land roughly corresponded to the old provinces of Kappadokia, the Anatolikon, and the southern part of the Armeniakon: a swathe of territory that holds particular resonance for us here, since it overlaps almost identically with areas where Paulicians were active from the second half of the 9th century, when they participated in such raiding activity themselves. According to the conventional interpretation, Byzantine actors created this no-man's land through a scorched earth policy in the aftermath of the Arab invasions of Syria and Palestine. It is argued that Herakleios uprooted the area's inhabitants and levelled its fortresses in order to prevent these falling into Muslim hands and also to make it an unappealing target for Islamic attacks.[76] A century or so later, Constantine V's relocation of populations from Muslim-held territories served to undermine the infrastructure of Islamic raiding.[77] Meanwhile, the late 8th-/early 9th-century reorganisation of the *thughūr* has been interpreted as an attempt to institutionalise the raiding of Roman

74 Zaroui Pogossian, for instance, considers the frontier the greatest conditioning factor for the Paulicians' rise to prominence, allowing them to become "a religious entity with its own particular interests [that] went beyond the traditional frontiers imposed by cultural and linguistic heritage, whether Greek or Armenian." Zaroui Pogossian, "The Frontier Existence of the Paulician Heretics," in *Annual of Medieval Studies at* CEU 6 (2000), pp. 203–206, quotation at p. 206.

75 Recent palynological studies have shown the predominance of anthropogenic factors over climactic ones in conditioning land use. Warren J. Eastwood et al., "Integrating Palaeoecological and Archaeo-Historical Records: Land Use and Landscape Change in Cappadocia (Central Turkey) since Late Antiquity," in *Archaeology of the Countryside in Medieval Anatolia*, eds. Tasha Vorderstrasse, Jacob Roodenberg (Leiden, 2009), p. 55.

76 Lilie, "The Byzantine-Arab Borderland," pp. 13–16.

77 Lilie, "The Byzantine-Arab Borderland," pp. 15–16.

territories.[78] This reorganisation is predominantly credited to Hārūn al-Rashīd, whose reign saw a highpoint of Islamic raiding activity, due to the caliphate's strength and the empire's preoccupation with Bulgaria.[79] Thus, it is argued that the no-man's land was a depopulated and undeveloped area, largely as a result of top-down processes impelled by the Roman Empire and the 'Abbāsid Caliphate.

While the despoiled character of the region remains generally accepted, critics have increasingly questioned the extent of this depredation and the role of top-down processes in conditioning it. This is exemplified by the work of A. Asa Eger, who disclaims the applicability of the 'no-man's land', arguing that this notion was retroactively imposed upon the area by later Islamic authors such as al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī.[80] His analysis, which is primarily based upon the Islamic side of the frontier, but also incorporates Byzantine data, demonstrates that the region shows significant archaeological continuity from Late Antiquity, while noting that longer-term changes in subsistence patterns have traditionally gone unnoticed due to the scant remains they leave in the archaeological record and, moreover, the marginal interest that many archaeological surveys display for this period.[81] The despoliation of Roman areas through raiding, while significant, was partially ameliorated through changing patterns of land use which had already been adopted for economic reasons. Besides this, archaeological evidence shows that certain sites thrived during the period. This is borne out by recent excavations at Amorion, which have uncovered a prosperous centre of trade and industrial production, whose finds indicate commercial exchange over surprising distances within Asia Minor.[82] The ultimate fate of the city is a stark reminder of the period's dangers, since

78 Walter E. Kaegi, Jr., "Confronting Islam: Emperors Versus Caliphs (641-c.850)," in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c.500–1492*, ed. Jonathan Shepard (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 388–390.

79 Michael D. Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven, 1996), pp. 99–106.

80 Alexander Asa Eger, *The Islamic-Byzantine Frontier: Interaction and Exchange among Muslim and Christian Communities* (London, 2014), pp. 2–12.

81 Eger, *Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*, pp. 12–18. On the area, see also J. Eric Cooper, Michael J. Decker, *Life and Society in Byzantine Cappadocia* (Basingstoke, 2012).

82 See in particular the four volumes (to date) of reports from the site. Margaret A.V. Gill, Christopher S. Lightfoot, Eric A. Ivison, Mark T. Wypyski, *Amorium Reports, Finds I: The Glass (1987–1997)* (Oxford, 2002); Christopher S. Lightfoot, ed., *Amorium Reports 2: Research Papers and Technical Reports* (Oxford, 2003); Christopher S. Lightfoot, Eric A. Ivison, eds., *Amorium Reports 3: The Lower City Enclosure. Find Reports and Technical Studies* (Istanbul, 2012); Constantina Katsari, Christopher S. Lightfoot, Adil Özme, *Amorium Reports 4: The Amorium Mint and the Coin Finds* (Berlin, 2012).

it was ruthlessly sacked by al-Mu'taṣim in 838 in retaliation for Theophilos' campaign against Sozopetra (Zibatra), Arsamosata (Shimshāṭ), and Melitene in the previous year, but campaigns of this ferocity were not the norm. In fact, the prohibitive expense and logistical difficulties of al-Mu'taṣim's campaign, whose ambition would not be matched for the rest of the century, betray the fact that raiding was usually more modest and followed semi-normalised patterns of behaviour.[83] The regular exchange of prisoners, for instance, attests to a degree of mutual understanding, even if this could be jettisoned in periods of more acute conflict.[84] In a similar vein, the predictability of Islamic raids, which were largely confined to the regular campaigning seasons, allowed Byzantine authorities to take appropriate precautions.[85] On the surface, interactions such as these appear to be conditioned by the great powers of empire and caliphate, but in reality local authorities played a greater role than is often credited. This trend is particularly true in Islamic territories, where the peripheries increasingly became loci of power as the central authority of the caliphate waned. As a result, the inhabitants of the region now assume a greater prominence in scholarship devoted to the frontiers. A by-product of this emphasis is the attention paid to such areas in the engendering of new forms of identity and social praxis, particularly in contexts which are heterogeneous in their culture, religion, and ethnic composition.[86]

By following this line of argument we must take care to clarify what exactly frontiers constitute in our setting. Most obviously, the traditional depiction of the no-man's land as a barren and sparsely populated area hardly seems an ideal fit for ethno-cultural interaction. Here it must be remembered that the areas directly exposed to Islamic raiding lay within Kappadokia and the Anatolikon. These areas are adjacent to the geographical frontier between imperial and caliphal territory, but they do not encompass all of it. The northern passes between the empire and Armenia, where the Paulician presence first becomes evident, were not subject to conflict as regularly. While the empire's

83 Juan Signes Codoñer, *The Emperor Theophilos and the East, 829–842: Court and Frontier in Byzantium during the Last Phase of Iconoclasm* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 298–299; 307–308.

84 Hugh N. Kennedy, "Byzantine-Arab Diplomacy in the Near East from the Islamic Conquests to the Mid-Eleventh Century," in *Byzantine Diplomacy* (*Papers from the 24th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990*), eds. Jonathan Shepard, Simon Franklin (London, 1992), pp. 137–140. For prisoner taking as a semi-formalised affair in near contemporary Calabria, see Adele Curness, ""Slavery" Outside the Slave Trade," in *Transmitting and Circulating the Late Antique and Byzantine Worlds*, eds. Mirela Ivanova, Hugh Jeffery (Leiden, 2020), pp. 102–122.

85 Eger, *Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*, pp. 251; 253–255.

86 Eger, *Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*, pp. 9–11.

eastern boundary may at first seem firmly defined, not least because it follows the main mountain chains of eastern Asia Minor, in practice the border was hazy and permeable. Crucially, moreover, recent theoretical developments serve to characterise this space as a deeper zone of interaction. James Scott's anthropological model of 'shatter zones', originally inspired by the uplands of south-east Asia, exemplifies areas whose inaccessibility fosters social structures and subsistence patterns that inhibit incorporation by empires or states. The inhabitants of these areas may have been born entirely outside civilising processes, or, more controversially, they may have consciously absconded from sedentary society itself.[87] Scott's model is certainly not applicable to eastern Asia Minor in all periods – it is important not to deploy it as a vehicle of geographical determinism – but it does fit our era of despoliation and frequent Islamic razzias. If anything, the "bewildering ethnic and linguistic complexity" that characterises shatter zones is more apt in the case of the mountains and valleys of Armenia and greater Caucasia to the east.[88] For our purposes, Scott's model is valuable because shatter zones are conducive to the formation of new social entities that transcend the distinction between the religious and the ethno-cultural, thereby appearing as either millennial religiosities or identity communities depending on perspective.[89] Moreover, actors in shatter zones often position their identities in conditional and malleable ways towards outsiders, as well as invoking counterhegemonic narratives among themselves.

All of this resonates well with the *Didaskalie*, the Paulicians, and the areas they inhabited. Similar phenomena are apparent in other marginal regions across the Near East, such as the Mardaïtes (or, as they are described in Islamic sources, Jarājima), who were active in the Taurus, Amanus, and Lebanese mountains at various points during the 7th and early 8th centuries, or the Khurramiyya who sprung up amid the inaccessible highlands on the peripheries of caliphal territory during the early 9th century.[90] Scott's model does

87 James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven/London, 2009), pp. 1–13. I am indebted to Nik Matheou and Hugh Jeffery for bringing the concept to my attention.

88 Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, pp. 7–8. For an application of Scott's approach to Asia Minor in earlier periods, see Peter Thonemann, "Phrygia: An Anarchist History, 950 BC-AD 100," in *Roman Phrygia: Culture and Society*, ed. Peter Thonemann (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 1–40.

89 Scott devotes a chapter each to ethnogenesis and millenarian religious movements, while noting that the latter can inform the former. See Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, pp. 238–324, especially pp. 312–313.

90 The Mardaïtes often formed a fifth column of sorts for the empire in Muslim territories, although at times they were also part of the Islamic frontier defences. Many were resettled in the empire under Justinian II. See Hans Ditten, *Ethnische Verschiebungen zwischen*

not, however, fit perfectly with our context. Throughout his analysis, much emphasis is placed on a dichotomisation of state and counterstate, which seems ill-fitting to our context because Paulician identity seems to have arisen through multidirectional interactions within local groups, rather than being formed in contradistinction to a regional hegemon, at least initially.[91] In our case, the frontier is a source of vitality in and of itself, as is memorably evoked in one of the most famous Byzantine literary texts: the *Digenis Akritis* poems and, more specifically, the Grottaferrata recension. This version of the text not only incorporates characters with a close resemblance to figures from later Paulician history – Karbeas, Chrysocheir, and ʻAmr al-Aqṭaʻ all have analogues within it – but its titular hero, Basil, the Frontiersman of Double Descent, is the son of a Muslim emir and a Byzantine governor's daughter.[92] Even more notably, the text conjures a convincing portrayal of frontier life: conflict is not fought along narrow confessional lines, for the majority of Digenis's exploits are directed against fellow Christians, usually brigands. The survival of these topoi in the Grottaferrata version (which was perhaps codified in the 12th century, although the surviving manuscript dates from the late-13th/14th century) implies that this setting resonated among contemporary societies while also remaining evocative in later periods.[93] The vitality of our context is further confirmed by the rise of the Skleroi and Argyroi magnate families, who rose to be among the principal political actors in the eastern reaches of Asia Minor shortly after the eclipse of the Paulicians in the later 9th century.[94] Again, these families could be found in allegiance with Roman or Islamic actors depending on circumstances: a certain "Son of Skleros" was an erstwhile ally

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der Balkanhalbinsel und Kleinasien vom Ende 6. bis zur zweiten Hälfte des 9. Jahrhunderts (Berlin, 1993), pp. 146–147; Paul M. Cobb, *White Banners: Contention in ʻAbbasid Syria, 750–880* (Albany, 2001), pp. 113–115. On the Khurramiyya, see most recently Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge, 2012).

91 For a complementary example of non-hegemonic identity formation, see Christopher M. Stojanowski, *Bioarchaeology of Ethnogenesis in the Colonial Southeast* (Gainesville, 2010), pp. 128–153.

92 Elizabeth Jeffreys, ed., *Digenis Akritis: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. xxxiv–xxxv.

93 Jeffreys, ed., *Digenis Akritis*, pp. xvii-xxi. See also Hugh F. Graham, "Digenis Akritas as a Source for Frontier History," in *Actes du XIVe congrés international des études byzantines. Bucarest, 6–12 septembre, 1971*, eds. Mihai Berza, Eugen Stănescu (Bucharest, 1975), pp. 321–329.

94 Cooper, Decker, *Byzantine Cappadocia*, pp. 247–252; Jean-François Vannier, *Familles byzantines: les Argyroi, IXe-XIIe siècles* (Paris, 1975); Werner Seibt, *Die Skleroi: eine prosopographisch-sigillographische Studie* (Vienna, 1976).

of 'Amr al-Aqṭa' around the time of Karbeas' defection.[95] This implies that the Paulicians were only one manifestation of a complex interplay of social forces on the eastern frontier.

In short, the characterisation sketched above favours seeing the frontier not merely as geopolitical, but also ethno-cultural, as the respective analyses of Eger and Scott advocate. Adopting such a perspective necessitates seeing frontiers as plural, overlapping, and layered. To illustrate the point, since the migrations of our period were altering the ethno-cultural reality of regions from Paphlagonia in the west to Tayk' in the east, we may speak of a deep ethno-cultural frontier zone in this region, whose extent would expand or contract, thicken, or dilute, depending upon the intensity of intercourse. It is important to stress that there were no absolutes in such a heterogeneous area. While the underlying dynamics of most of the interaction we have seen above stem from hostility between Christians and Muslims, this trend does not apply universally; by the mid-9th century we see evidence for cooperation across the confessional divide among Paulicians and others.[96] Frontiers shifted, sometimes radically and sometimes less so, even in cases where topography or culture seems to preclude it. For our purposes, this observation is important because it gives indications of how even a barren and unpopulated area could be a source of dynamism. While areas of Kappadokia and the Anatolikon were despoiled by raiding, these areas lay adjacent to zones of ethno-cultural plurality that could engender groups suited to marginal areas if the right opportunities presented themselves. In the case of the Paulicians in the 840s, the alliance with 'Amr al-Aqṭa' provided such an opportunity. As we shall see in the following chapter, there are indications that the early decades of the 9th century were similarly conducive to new settlement in the area. However, this is not true of the 8th century, so it seems that the entry of the Paulicians into eastern Asia Minor must be due to other factors. One of these, namely pastoralism, merits particular attention.

95 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur Libri I-IV*, 4:16, eds. J. Michael Featherstone, Juan Signes Codoñer (Boston/Berlin, 2015), pp. 238–239, l. 30–31.

96 The phenomenon was not unknown earlier in the century. In addition to Thomas the Slav's defection to the caliphate, there is the example of Naṣr b. Shabath al-'Uqaylī, a Qaysī warlord active in northern Syria in the early 9th century, who contemplated a Byzantine alliance upon al-Ma'mūn's entry to Baghdād, although the proposal was rejected out of hand by his furious supporters. See Hugh N. Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate: A Political History* (London, 1981), pp. 168–169; Michael the Syrian, *The Syriac Chronicle*, 12:9, p. 538.

4 Paulicians and Pastoralism

In the latter half of the 9th century, Paulician economic strategy was predicated largely on the raiding of Byzantine territory, which allowed them to seize prisoners, livestock, and other forms of loot. The approach was perhaps coopted from established Islamic practices, given the long history of Muslim raiding within Asia Minor. There is, however, no indication that Paulicians used this approach systematically beforehand. Sergios-Tychikos does claim in his letters that he frequently and unsuccessfully sought to stop his followers from taking Roman prisoners, which implies continuity of practice, but the extent of this activity seems limited in his career compared to later developments. The *Didaskalie*, on the other hand, continually emphasises Byzantine aggression against the Paulicians and never posits reprisal as a conceivable option. It is also silent on their subsistence patterns, aside from a solitary reference to pastoralism, which it invokes when Joseph-Epaphroditos dupes an Islamic army by claiming that he and his followers were travelling to Syria for pasturage. Despite the exceptionality of this reference, pastoralism merits serious consideration as a facet of Paulician activity for a number of reasons.[97] First, among Eger's observations of interaction across the frontier, he alludes to Christian pastoral groups who migrated between areas in Byzantine, Armenian, or Islamic spheres of influence, in the process displaying little regard for the territorial niceties of the region.[98] Second, pastoralism is given significant emphasis in Scott's analysis of shatter zones, where it is one of several economic strategies that social groups may adopt to preclude unwanted interference from neighbouring powers. Other suitable niches include shifting cultivation and brigandage, the latter of which is well attested among Paulicians in later periods. For Scott, actors may strategically shift between these niches when circumstances render this appropriate; a portrayal which once again seems fitting to our context.[99] Since the pastoral connection may well provide

97 On pastoralism and the Paulicians, see also George Huxley, "The Historical Geography of the Paulician and T'ondrakian Heresies," in *Medieval Armenian Culture*, eds. Thomas J. Samuelian, Michael E. Stone (Chico, 1984), pp. 81; 89. A pastoral emphasis is also hinted at in Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy: A Reinterpretation," p. 98, which notes a passage in the patriarch Nikephoros' *Refutatio et Eversio* that states that Constantive v indoctrinated Constantinopolitan troops, many of which he recruited from herdsmen, against the orthodox. Garsoïan conjectures that these herdsmen may have originated among Joseph-Epaphroditos' Paulician followers. For the passage, see Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus*, p. 247.

98 Eger, *Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*, pp. 259–261.

99 Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, pp. 182–207.

continuity with later Paulician militarism and potentially explain their rise to prominence during the 8th century, it is essential to examine it here.

The *Didaskalie*'s sole allusion implies that the seasonal migration of pastoralists was common in the marginal zones between empire and caliphate. The passage in question describes the respective migrations of Joseph and his rival Zacharias from Mananalis. When they are unexpectedly accosted by an Islamic army, Zacharias flees and thereby causes his followers to be slain, while Joseph employs the following stratagem and guides his community safely to Episparis:

> And Joseph the Senseless, having learnt this [the massacre of Zacharias' community], turned the wagons as if he were going toward Syria, and when the Saracens came, he told them that he had set out for pasture and cheese making. Since they were persuaded by this defence, the Agarenes departed and allowed them to go unmolested.[100]

Although it is difficult to credit that a Muslim force would be fooled so easily considering that they had only just intercepted Zacharias' band, the passage is valuable in showing that seasonal migrations were routine in this region. The distances involved could evidently be significant, although it seems that by heading "toward Syria" Joseph was merely claiming to be travelling southward. More obviously, the passage attests practices of raising livestock among the Paulicians, but it is unclear how far this emphasis should be extended. As we saw in Chapter 3, the *Didaskalie*'s narrative aim is to extol the virtue of cunning and since Joseph uses transhumant pastoralism as a ruse here, the account perhaps suggests that it was *not* the normal form of subsistence among the Paulicians. Even if this is true, it is clear that they could practice this activity when appropriate. Across the Near East generally, semi-nomadic pastoral practices involved coexistence and trade with neighbouring sedentary communities whenever the demand for grazing land or other essentials made this expedient.[101] Practising this way of life would be most apposite in areas suited to both itinerant and sedentary living patterns – and this is exactly where we find Paulicians in the early stages of the *Didaskalie*'s account. It describes frequent migrations between Mananalis and Kibossa, both of which lay in areas suited to pastoralism while being well connected with major urban hubs and

100 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 126, pp. 50–51. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 82.

101 See, for instance, Michael B. Rowton, "Enclosed Nomadism," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17:1 (1974), pp. 1–7.

trade routes. That being said, the Paulician presence in these areas is not explicitly connected with pastoralism and the suitability of their settlements to this way of life diminishes as the narrative progresses. Joseph's flight to Antioch in Pisidia is difficult to rationalise on the basis of pastoral activity or indeed a desire to escape further Byzantine interference. Most pertinently, we have already seen that the spread of Paulician influence seems to have taken place along an east-west axis through northern Asia Minor, whereas in the centre of the peninsula, where pastoralism is historically rather better attested, their influence seems to have been less prominent. As a result, it seems that pastoralism was not intrinsic to their identity or success, but only one of several subsistence strategies that could be adopted wherever appropriate.

This picture is largely borne out by the evidence for pastoral activity in Asia Minor in our period, which, although scanty, implies forms of organisation that do not fit well with the account of the *Didaskalie*. As noted above, it is unwise to dissociate pastoralism too markedly from other modes of production, since most agriculture in the peninsula was composite and diversified, thereby involving symbiotic relationships between populations who were neither totally agrarian nor pastoral. Polyculture and cooperation were the norm in most settings.[102] In line with this, during earlier and later periods most pastoral activity in central Anatolia was highly specialised, with particular emphases on cattle ranching and stud farms dedicated to providing mounts for the army.[103] These forms of production are well attested in the western and central stretches of the Anatolian plateau, as well as Paphlagonia and Kappadokia, but are less evident in the Paulician heartlands to the north-east, which lacked the abundance of great landholders characteristic of these regions.[104] The salient

102 For polyculture, see Angeliki E. Laiou and Cécile Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 12; Jacques Lefort, "The Rural Economy, Seventh-Twelfth Centuries," in *The Economic History of Byzantium: from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C., 2002), pp. 233–234.

103 Lefort, "The Rural Economy," pp. 263–264.

104 Speros Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1971), p. 25, n. 132. Although it dates from the later 10th century, the *Book of the Eparch* implies that ranching was common in Anatolia, mainly from its reference to regulations concerning butchers in the area. See *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen*, 15, ed. Johannes Koder (Vienna, 1991), pp. 122–127. English translation: *Roman Law in the Later Roman Empire: Byzantine Guilds Professional and Commercial: Ordinances of Leo VI c.895 from the Book of the Eparch*, ed. and trans. Edwin H. Freshfield (Cambridge, 1889), pp. 38–39. For other textual sources for livestock holding, see *Nomos georgikos*, in *Vizantiĭskiĭ zemledel'cheskiĭ zakon*, eds. Igor Medvedev et al. (Leningrad, 1984). English translation: *The Laws of the Isaurian Era: The Ecloga and its Appendices*, ed. and trans. Michael T.G Humphreys (Liverpool, 2017), pp. 129–139; "La vie de S. Philarète," eds. and trans. Marie-Henriette Fourmy, Maurice

question is whether we can posit continuity of practice throughout our period, since, if so, it suggests that pastoral activity was only a minor reason for the Paulicians' growth to prominence. This is a vexed question considering the depredations that afflicted Asia Minor in previous centuries and the lack of evidence in documentary sources and the archaeological record.

The most notable exponent of continuity is John Haldon, whose view is founded on the belief that the landed elite retained their status throughout our period.[105] Others, notably Michel Kaplan, James Howard-Johnston, and Peter Sarris, believe that the scarcity of labour caused by dislocation elevated the status of the peasantry, which thereby eroded the influence of the magnates.[106] Even if this is true, it is far from certain that patterns of land use changed as a result. Both textual and archaeological sources are inconclusive.[107] Palynological data from Nar Gölü in south-central Anatolia suggests a decline in the extent of arable land between the late 7th and mid-10th centuries, with a corresponding increase in woodland.[108] Pastoral activity also declined, albeit not to the same degree.[109] Eger links this data with the practice of limited stock raising, as opposed to large-scale ranching.[110] It may well be that the *Didaskalie*'s reference to pastoralism reflects a general trend towards

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Leroy, *Byzantion* 9 (1934), pp. 112–167. For ranching, see Alan Harvey, *Economic Expansion in the Byzantine Empire 900–1200* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 40–41; 149–157; John F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: the Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 155–160; Klaus Belke, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini. Bd. 9, Paphlagonien und Honōrias* (Vienna, 1996), pp. 143–144.

105 Haldon, *The Empire*, pp. 162–177; 183–187. He countenances that their influence may have declined more in his early work. On this, see Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, pp. 129–130; 153.

106 Michel Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VIe au XIe siècle: propriété et exploitation du sol* (Paris, 1992), p. 185; James Howard-Johnston, "Social Change in Early Medieval Byzantium," in *Lordship and Learning: Studies in Memory of Trevor Aston*, ed. Ralph Evans (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 46–48; Peter Sarris, "Economics, Trade and "Feudalism,"" in *A Companion to Byzantium*, ed. Liz James (Oxford, 2010), pp. 33–35. To a large degree, the debate is still framed within the terms set by Georg Ostrogorsky, who saw the development of a free peasantry as a key reason for the empire's later successes against the caliphate. On this, see Georg Ostrogorsky, "Agrarian Conditions in the Byzantine Empire in the Middle Ages," in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe: Volume I: The Agrarian Life of the Middle Ages*, ed. Michael M. Postan (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 207–215, with criticism at Haldon, *The Empire*, pp. 267–268.

107 Cécile Morrisson, Jean-Pierre Sodini, "The Sixth-Century Economy," in *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C., 2002), p. 183.

108 Eastwood et al., "Integrating Palaeoecological," pp. 52–53.

109 Eastwood et al., "Integrating Palaeoecological," p. 62.

110 Eger, *Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*, pp. 259–60.

livestock rearing within the frontier zone, since, as a source of movable wealth, animals were easier to relocate and protect in the event of aggression.[111] If so, then it seems that Paulician transhumance may have been attuned to regional norms, but it does not follow that this was key to explaining their success or distinctiveness around the turn of the 9th century.

One of the attractions of applying Scott's concept of shatter zones to the areas inhabited by the Paulicians is that, as noted above, it provides the tools to interpret pastoralism as a strategic choice that may be adopted under certain circumstances, rather than an intrinsic facet of their lifestyle.[112] This portrayal fits well with the *Didaskalie*, as well as aspects of later Paulician subsistence. Much of their raiding activity in the mid- and late 9th century focused on seizing livestock as a form of movable wealth, much in line with the "stock rustling" or "militarised transhumance" that Hugh Kennedy sees as representative of Muslim practices during the period.[113] Paulicians and Muslims often raided hand in hand: al-Ṭabarī recounts that, during a raid in 860/61, 'Amr al-Aqṭa' seized 7000 livestock and Karbeas seized 5000.[114] This combination of pastoralism and militarism is emblematic of Scott's shatter zones, while a martial emphasis is also apparent in many migrating groups from Armenia, as already noted.[115] The confluence of militarism, pastoralism, and inter-Armenian identity politics undoubtedly informed aspects of Paulician activity in certain contexts, but it bears reasserting that other tendencies were evident in the movement and are encapsulated above all in the person of Sergios. As we have seen, this *didaskalos* sought reconciliation with Byzantine authorities, while his career also marks an increasing institutionalisation of Paulician belief, where an ecclesiastical hierarchy of sorts becomes apparent. These tensions are best explained by proposing that the rapid growth of the Paulicians around the turn of the 9th century involved the coalescence of previously semi-independent faith communities, many of which differed in their way of life and their relationship with outsiders.

111 Eger, *Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*, pp. 251–256; 259–261.

112 Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, pp. 182–207.

113 John F. Haldon, Hugh N. Kennedy, "The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Military Organisation and Society in the Borderlands," *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 19 (1980), pp. 115–116.

114 'Amr's haul is listed as 15,000 in a variant manuscript. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-al-mulūk. The history of al-Ṭabarī*, 40 vols, vol. 34, trans. Joel L. Kraemer (Albany, 1989), p. 167.

115 Garsoïan, "The Problem of Armenian Integration," pp. 61–64. For the presence of such pastoral groups in military ventures, see Eger, *Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*, pp. 282–285.

5 Labelling the Paulicians of Asia Minor

Thus far, we have seen that Paulician identities were positioned uneasily against both their Armenian and Roman counterparts. The Armenian origins of the name imply distrust rather than belonging, but, despite this, intercourse among Armenian populations was crucial to their differentiation from other identity categories. Similarly, while Roman aggression against the Paulicians is common from the 810s onward, the prosopography of the latter implies that they had appeal for Greek speakers, whereas Sergios' attempts at reconciliation also imply a sense of loyalty to the empire. All of this implies that Paulician identity was not rigidly bounded, but carried sufficient appeal to infiltrate new contexts and prosper in them. Other facets of their activity, such as pastoralism or militarism, are insufficient to explain this appeal. The obvious solution is that the religious views Paulicians espoused, whether expressed through narratives like that of the *Didaskalie* or the charismatic displays of their leaders and adherents, instilled a sense of religious belonging that other provincials found compelling. In the context of a recently persecuted community, it is easy to see why the *Didaskalie* could make such a strong impression: it reasserted the legitimacy and preeminence of Paulician belief and community, while casting their Roman adversaries as harsh and indiscriminate persecutors. Such a narrative was unimaginable prior to the era of persecution, but its essential characteristics, such as its ability to explain contemporary events by invoking recognisable scriptural precedents, could prove as evocative in earlier periods. Above all, there is an immediacy to Paulician religion that distinguishes it from its contemporaries; unlike the biblical eschatology that saw the Romans as the successors of the Jews as God's Chosen People, it was lived in the present and was based on the core Christian texts of the New Testament. Sergios was still founding new churches. Romans and Christians were not one and the same. The conflict between them was still ongoing. Acts, the Pauline letters, and the Gospels were not echoes of a distant past, but a living reality for the Paulicians of 9th-century Asia Minor.

The origins of this distinctly Pauline brand of Christianity remain mysterious, but it seems clear that Paulician belief grew organically from local manifestations of Christianity, or at least something not appreciably different from orthodox perspectives. Everything we have seen from Paulician testimony implies that their scriptural inspiration was conventional in origin, even if its utilisation was not. Indications from the *Didaskalie* imply deviation in textual practices from the very beginnings of the movement. According to its testimony, Constantine-Silvanos taught orally, using only the Gospel and the Apostle. Even if Constantine's historicity can be questioned, the limited

canon associated with him seems firmly attested, since later didaskaloi, such as Sergios-Tychikos, abandoned the practice and felt compelled to justify it. Constantine's approach evidently contravened the accepted orthodoxy of the day, but explaining this deviance is not too much trouble: we can take the *Didaskalie* at face value for once and posit that charismatic religiosity played a crucial role in the early development of the movement and, to a lesser or greater extent, remained a factor thereafter. Leadership of this kind seems to have been a source of considerable energy, but it also led to discontent. The factional disputes described in the *Didaskalie* suggest this and, even if the historicity of many such events is doubtful, it does seem that tensions had reached a head by the career of Sergios. On the one hand, he is the best attested *didaskalos* and presided over the greatest expansion of the movement's influence, but his authority was evidently questioned during his career, to such a degree that his role fell into abeyance after his death. This fact alone shows that charismatic leadership too cannot have been the determining factor in the Paulicians' rapid rise to prominence. It seems that Sergios was unable to contain the centrifugal forces of a movement that had swiftly grown beyond its original social basis, in the process accumulating internal contradictions which were increasingly laid bare. Peter Brown's concept of the itinerant holy man, whose popularity and influence often exceeded those of provincial bishops, has become almost ubiquitous in studies of religion in the Mediterranean world.[116] A similar appeal seems to lurk behind Paulician charismatic leadership, probably more so in the early phases of the movement, but it seems that this was swiftly transcended, in the process become something more organised and ideologically sophisticated. Nevertheless, even this more organised manifestation seems to have been disintegrating during the latter part of Sergios' career.

On balance, it seems that charismatic leadership proved crucial to the Paulicians' success only when it was channelled toward the furtherance of a communal identity that compelled the devotion of others. Ultimately, the Paulicians' ability to transcend distinctions between the urban and rural, the pastoral and sedentary, Armenian and Roman, cannot be convincingly explained except through a sense of religious community that outsiders found appealing and evocative. No other hypothesis can account for the presence of Paulicians in locales throughout Asia Minor and Thrace only a few years after their first appearance in Byzantine sources. Since our knowledge of Paulician

116 Peter R.L. Brown, "Holy Men," in *The Cambridge Ancient History, XIV: Late Antiquity. Empire and Successors AD 425–600*, eds. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, Michael Whitby (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 781–801.

organisation, sacramental practices, or even doctrinal fundamentals are not well illuminated within the *Didaskalie*, it is difficult to explain the appeal of Paulician community beyond the fact that it was grounded in apostolic texts and a Pauline conception of worshippers joined in the Spirit. These communities of the Spirit probably map onto the churches founded by the *didaskaloi* to some degree, but since Byzantine writers consistently locate Paulicians in other locations, such as Thrace and parts of western Asia Minor, the churches evidently did not incorporate all Paulician adherents. Furthermore, it seems that these churches were not tied together in a monolithic superstructure. When Sergios wrote to the Church of the Macedonians at Koloneia, for instance, his words imply that this community was not under his authority.[117] The realisation of a community of the Spirit seemingly differed in its articulation from place to place, which is understandable if missionary activity was as important in disseminating ideas as the *Didaskalie* suggests. As a consequence, the Paulician movement as understood in its broadest sense may have arisen from the convergence of semi-independent faith communities, rather than a process of division from a single point of origin. The *Didaskalie* may invoke the spectre of a primordial unity, but this has more to do with premodern narratives of community, as expressed in foundation myths or even heresiological texts, than the reality of social interaction.

The theory that Paulician origins were heterogeneous becomes more comprehensible when we note correspondences between their lived religion and provincial Byzantine norms, which offer convincing reasons as to why their ideas and religious practices had such appeal. Private churches and chapels were an accepted practice throughout much of Asia Minor, so the institutional church's reach in the region was not all encompassing.[118] This lack of oversight may have been crucial to the spread of Paulician ideas, especially if the movement were able to tap into commercial or kinship networks. Much has also been made of similarities between Paulician opposition to imperial power and other strands of anti-institutional sentiment throughout peripheral areas of the peninsula.[119] Disgruntlement could often be acute, particularly in times of onerous taxation or military service. Admittedly, when framed in such terms, this impulse could apply almost universally. The empire must also have made provincials feel enfranchised on some level since it is otherwise difficult to account for its tenacious hold on its eastern provinces. Resistance to imperial

117 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 158, pp. 58–59. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 87.

118 Cooper, Decker, *Byzantine Cappadocia*, pp. 154–158.

119 Haldon, *The Empire*, pp. 183–185.

power seems to have been tactical for the most part, predicated on calculated acts of resistance or non-compliance in order to counteract egregious exactions on daily life, or mitigate the effect of natural or man-made disasters. Only in exceptional circumstances, such as the Paulician campaign of insurrection from the 840s onward, did sentiments of this kind aspire to alter the fundamental power dynamics of the region. The *Didaskalie*, unsurprisingly for a text written shortly after Byzantine persecution, articulates discontent of this nature starkly: the empire and its rulers are distant and brutal opponents whose whims have the power to eradicate the Paulicians at a stroke.

Before the interventions of Michael I and Leo V, Paulician narratives may not have been as bleak, but it is easy to see how anti- or non-imperial rhetoric could have mobilised support during the iconophile intermission, which seemed a period of conspicuous divine displeasure to many. In the introduction, we noted the factional intrigues between Eirene and the son she eventually blinded, Constantine VI. One of the most acute conflicts between the two was the Moechian Controversy, whose partisan fallout in the charged atmosphere of ecclesiastical and monastic circles would rumble on into the reign of Michael I. The affair centred on Constantine's dissatisfaction with his wife Maria, whom he unceremoniously divorced and packed off to a convent, much to the chagrin of his mother and others. He then sought to force through a marriage to his mistress Theodote by any means necessary, eventually gaining the patriarch Tarasios' acquiescence, if not support. The resulting union was officiated by Joseph of Kathara, with whom many of the most intransigent monastics, such as Plato of Sakkoudion, Theodore the Stoudite, and the latter's brother Joseph, Archbishop of Thessalonika, refused communion. This led to their exile in the reign of Nikephoros, from which they were eventually recalled by Michael I.[120] If the *De sanctis patriarchis Tarasio et Nicephoro* is to be believed, Constantine VI threatened the resumption of iconoclasm to attain his aims and, even if this did not come to fruition, it would not be long before iconoclasm reared its head again, for the empire's troubles were not solely religious.[121] Although the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn gave the empire some respite after Hārūn al-Rashīd's reign, this only coincided with the rise of an arguably more dangerous threat: the Bulgar Khan Krum,

120 Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 290–291; 360–363. See also Thomas Pratsch, *Theodoros Studites (759–826) – zwischen Dogma und Pragma* (Frankfurt, 1998), pp. 83–114; 147–178.

121 *De sanctis patriarchis Tarasio et Nicephoro*, *Patrologia Graeca* 99, col. 1852–1853. Constantine's threat is probably a literary invention by Ignatios the Deacon, who authored the life. See Pratsch, *Theodoros Studites*, pp. 87; 89, n. 25.

whose decisive victories over the empire at Pliska and Versinikia eventually brought Leo V to the throne and impelled him to restore iconoclasm in 815.[122] Leo's intervention sought to recover the divine favour which had deserted the empire during the aforementioned travails.[123] By all indications, he was not the only one to think of it. It is doubtful that Constantine VI invoked it, but numerous conspiracies were launched to bring the sons of the great iconoclast Constantine V to the throne from the reign of Eirene to that of Michael I.[124]

Leo's actions were ultimately an imperially centred response to a crisis at the heart of imperial power. As is not surprising for such a protracted and contentious debate, iconoclasm and iconodulism were as tied up with conceptions of imperial and ecclesiastical authority, and the personal rivalries and institutional tensions that surrounded them, as much as they were with theology and everyday devotional practices. Paulician belief, on the other hand, stood apart from these concerns. It was therefore able to tap into anti-institutional sentiments, but, more importantly, it had a religious message of its own. Although this message may have differed in its articulation from context to context, it remained founded on apostolic texts and the sense of belonging they evoked. Roman narratives, on the other hand, were bound up with ideas of imperial power and prestige and, around the turn of the 9th century at least, it must have seemed that the empire and the narratives associated with it were failing. As noted many times already, the Byzantines' self-identification as the new Chosen People looked back to the Old Testament texts, but the increasing prominence of the latter is also apparent in other aspects of Byzantine life, not least law codes, such as the *Ekloga* of Leo III, or the desire of certain emperors to associate themselves with ancient Israelite patriarchs.[125] Although the Old Testament was conceptualised in terms of continuity with New Testament

122 For Pliska, see Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, pp. 489–491. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 672–673. For Versinikia, see Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, pp. 500–503. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 684–686.

123 Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 366–370.

124 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 454, l. 12–25. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 626–627; Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, pp. 496–497. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 679–680.

125 *Ecloga: das Gesetzbuch Leons III. und Konstantinos' V.*, 17:52, ed. Ludwig Burgmann (Frankfurt, 1983), pp. 242–243. English translation: *The Laws of the Isaurian Era: The Ecloga and its Appendices*, ed. and trans. Michael T.G Humphreys (Liverpool, 2017), p. 77. In our period, the most notable parallel is Basil I's association with David. Shaun Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886–912): Politics and People* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 122–132. See also Claudia Rapp, "Old Testament Models for Emperors in Early Byzantium," in *The Old Testament in Byzantium,* eds. Paul Magdalino, Robert S. Nelson (Washington, D.C., 2010), pp. 175–197.

works, the message was complex and, even if the worldview did not suffer appreciably as the empire's prestige and legitimacy crumbled, it may have been vulnerable to competitors with a more immediate appeal. We should not unduly overplay the importance of this biblical eschatology, especially since Byzantine religion was rich and could operate on many explanatory axes, but it is not difficult to see how Paulician thought-worlds could prove to be viable contenders. Their scriptural practices were both simpler and more recognisably Christian, espousing a religiosity that was suffused with references to the foundational apostolic texts and extolled participation in a community of the Spirit. Their recent lineage of Pauline-monikered leaders may have helped their cause, as may their missionary zeal, and imitation of canonical scripture. Their appeal was not universal, but it was evidently sufficient enough to take root, particularly in the more far-flung reaches of the empire.

On balance, it seems to have been the apostolic message of the Paulicians that proved most effective in their proselytising, whereas anti-institutional sentiment was only effective in certain contexts. More specifically, anti-imperial rhetoric only seems to have become crucial to Paulician identity after the persecutions of Michael I and Leo V. The *Didaskalie* goes far beyond the norms of contemporary critics by explicitly positioning emperors as enemies and persecutors of the Paulician community, but, despite this, it seems clear that Sergios favoured reconciliation with the empire at some point.[126] As we shall see in the following chapter, there are strong indications that relations between Paulicians and the empire had been more cordial beforehand. Theophanes' complaint that Nikephoros I favoured them may not have been wide of the mark. Nonetheless, it seems that by the time of Sergios there were significant internal divisions within the community, respectively based around a clericalised hierarchy and more militaristic strands of Paulicians.

Let us now return to the thesis of Paulician origins articulated at the beginning of this chapter and bring it into full focus. As noted there, the application of the Armenian descriptor Paulician is crucial, since it implies that the initial labelling of 'Paulicians' occurred in the frontier zone which straddled Armenia and the empire, long before the Paulicians came to the attention of central imperial authorities.[127] There is no evidence for high-level correspondence between the Byzantine and Armenian churches from the squabble between Germanos I and Yovhannēs Ōjnec'i in the 720s until Photios' exchanges with

126 For the limits of imperial criticism, see Haldon, *The Empire*, pp. 84–87.

127 See also Anne E. Redgate, "Catholicos John III's *Against the Paulicians* and the Paulicians of Tephrike," in *Armenian Sebastia/Sivas and Lesser Armenia*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Los Angeles, 2004), p. 83.

Zak'aria in the 860s, so it seems unlikely that knowledge of the label came about through formal ecclesiastical relations.[128] The most likely initial point of contact is rather the areas straddling the main migration routes between the empire and Armenia, as the *Didaskalie* suggests. Łewond's account of the flight of Armenians after the 747–750 revolt suggests that migrant groups were heterogeneous, which gives grounds for supposing that these labelling processes were initially a largely inter-Armenian affair. Quite why this minority were picked out as deviant is open to question. If the point of contention related to the prevailing theological concerns of the day, such as Christology, or the use of images, this would have been noticed swiftly. Outwardly observable indicators of alterity, such as pastoral subsistence patterns or idiosyncratic religious practices could have played their part, but it is unlikely that these were unusual enough in the areas that Paulicians were first attested to merit such attention. Preexisting enmity or militaristic tendencies are perhaps more probable conditioning factors. Still, it seems possible that Paulician alterity operated on another axis, which may well have been connected with charismatic leadership and the exclusive use of the Gospels and Pauline works. Most probably, it was not their religious differences that attracted attention, but distinctive forms of communal organisation that resulted from these, marking them out from the norm and causing them to be considered distinct from others.

The specifics of these labelling processes are obviously unknowable, but it seems certain that the interactions involved were multidirectional and involved reappropriation on the part of the labelled.[129] So far as we know, the designation 'Paulician' always remained an exonym in our period, so this reappropriation was not so much a reclamation of the label itself, but rather the signifiers associated with it. The most likely eventuality is that Armenian-speaking actors deployed the term 'Paulician' against an abnormal form of communal socio-religious praxis that was not easily comprehensible within contemporary doctrinal paradigms.[130] The objects of this labelling process

128 Greenwood, "A Reassessment," p. 162.

129 For a thought-provoking study of the Paulicians and labelling processes from the 10th to 12th centuries, see Hisatsugu Kusabu, "Seminaries, Cults and Militia in Byzantine Heresiologies: A Genealogy of the Labeling of "Paulicians,"" in *Radical Traditionalism: The Influence of Walter Kaegi in Late Antique, Byzantine and Medieval Studies*, eds. Christian Raffensperger, David Olster (Lexington, 2019), pp. 181–196.

130 For examples of the mutability of heretical names, see Kevin T. van Bladel, *From Sasanian Mandaeans to Ṣābians of the Marshes* (Leiden, 2017), pp. 89–97. Epiphanios' remarks on the Messalians are a good example from the sources. Epiphanios of Salamis, *Epiphanius Panarion*, 80:1–3, ed. Karl Holl, 3 vols, vol. 3 (Leipzig, 1933), pp. 484–488. English translation: *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, ed. and trans. Frank Williams, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Leiden, 2013), pp. 629–631.

consciously rejected the identification by emphasising their veneration of Paul, thereby circumscribing the community by reinforcing its sanctity and cohesion while challenging the religious credentials of those who had labelled it. Quite whether the original application of the name 'Paulician' was apt or not is unclear. Considering the obscurity of the term in Armenian sources, it may have been bandied around as a general denigratory term, but if Paulician religiosity had already developed a Pauline emphasis in its early days, as seems eminently possible, there may have been some logic behind the name. In this case, the external labelling process may have accentuated apostolic tendencies that had already begun to take root. The limitations of our source material are not conducive to dating these processes exactly (and, in my view, this endeavour is beside the point), but for clarity's sake it seems most likely that these proto-Paulicians should be placed in the early/mid-8th century. Although the historicity of the early *didaskaloi* is very much open to dispute, there seem to be kernels of truth behind their surviving portrayals in the *Didaskalie*. The *Treatise* tells us that later Paulicians would not anathematise them and Sergios-Tychikos evidently contravened the movement's original focus of teaching using only Pauline texts and the Gospels. This implies that Paulician identity had been distinct for at least a few generations before him. Yet only he, his rival Baanes, and the latter's predecessor Joseph-Epaphroditos seem to be securely traceable historical figures.

If all of the above is accepted, then a charismatic preacher in western Armenia may indeed have been the primordial source of Paulician belief. It is unclear whether the new community migrated back and forth between Armenia and the empire as frequently as the *Didaskalie* suggests, but it does seem that it grew steadily in prominence during the latter half of the 8th century. This has traditionally been explained by the thesis of an iconoclast alliance, but the analysis offered above suggests a different explanation. We have seen that migration from Armenia to the empire grew in intensity from the 750 onwards and it seems that Paulicians were part of this trend, thereby introducing new elements into what was already a region of some linguistic and cultural diversity. The context seems tailor-made for new evolutions in social practices and identity boundaries and, as such, comprises an appropriate setting for an intensification of the mechanisms of labelling and reappropriation posited above. These processes may have begun in Armenia proper, but undoubtedly continued as Paulicians spread throughout Asia Minor. It is possible that Armenian kinship networks were initially important in this diffusion, but the spread of Paulician ideas was most aided by its apostolic focus, which best explains its appeal to other Roman provincials. Since Paulician ideas were similar to existing expressions of Christianity within Asia Minor,

it could adapt itself to local conditions, thereby aiding its transmission to other provincials. Equally, however, this similarity allowed it to evolve and adopt influences from elsewhere. The weakness of the institutional church undoubtedly helped in this regard. Commercial networks too were crucial and perhaps explain the presence of Paulicians in the capital by the beginning of the 9th century. As the *Didaskalie* would have it, this dissemination occurred through a single line of *didaskaloi* whose legitimacy was manifest to all. In fact, it seems certain that the expansion of the Paulician faith was more complex than this. The *Didaskalie* also alludes to numerous rivals and pretenders who headed their own communities. The difference between the true shepherd and fraudster is clearly dictated by the *Didaskalie*'s perspective, so rather than accepting the dichotomy it presents at face value, we should instead see Paulician proselytisation at this time as operating on various axes driven by different strands of Paulicians, who may or may not have been affiliated with one another. It should not be forgotten here that the movement incorporated elements who opposed hierarchy and institutions for much of its history. This tendency seems apparent in the internal dynamics of the movement, as well as its relations with outsiders.

These, then, were the reasons that a new form of belief had gained significant ground by the final decades of the 8th century, on the eve of the career of Sergios-Tychikos. His ministry, which saw the tensions between a clericalised hierarchy and a militant faction come to a head, illustrates the diversity of views which had so recently crystallised around the idea of Paulician identity. According to the above interpretation, charismatic leadership and scriptural focus were crucial to Paulician belief, but only because they resonated with the social reality of the region, whose ethnic, cultural, and economic complexity rendered it conducive to new influences and interactions. A key point to remember here is that these labelling processes were not isolated events, but rather part of long-term processes of identity negotiation, which in the case of the Paulicians, continued in different forms for much of the 9th century. Helpfully, these later negotiations are well documented, at least from the Byzantine side. Theophanes' conception of them as the new Manichaeans, which seems to be informed by the contemporary rhetoric surrounding persecution, implies that they were slandered by an association with Mani during the first decades of the 9th century. However, the *Treatise*, written a couple of decades later, undermines this Manichaean identification and instead suggests that their primary dependence was on Paul, son of Kallinike, although even here its use of Paulician sources allows it to acknowledge that they anathematised both him and Mani. We saw in Chapter 2 that in the 10th century Byzantine writers frequently conflated Paulicians and Muslims, so labelling

processes were still at work long after the Paulicians ceased to be a geopolitical irritant to the empire. Even more critically, our Byzantine sources indicate that these processes operated in the reverse direction. The *Treatise* informs us that Paulicians "call themselves Christians and us Romans," which seems to be the logical end point of the *Didaskalie* and its narrative reimagining of Acts, whereby the Roman persecutors of the Paulicians are likened to the Roman persecutors of the early church.[131] This link might initially seem an obvious one, but this is not necessarily true, since the prism of Acts presents persecution as a Jewish rather than Roman imperative.[132] As a result, in many ways, the Paulician reimagining of the Byzantines is similarly creative and polemical as in the reverse case. The conclusion to draw from this is perhaps that, if we wish to find the true significance of labels, we should look to the subjects of the process and the process itself rather than the objects.

To recap briefly, the development of a distinctly Pauline form of Paulician belief in Armenia and Asia Minor is not altogether simple to explain. The sole Paulician account which remains to us, the *Didaskalie*, is not a conventional historical source and its mythologised narrative is heavily influenced by the legacy of Byzantine persecution against the movement. Earlier Armenian sources do not enrich our historical understanding greatly, nor do they portray the Paulicians in the quintessentially Pauline terms that the *Didaskalie* evokes. Finally, the thesis of an iconoclast alliance cannot explain the increasing prominence of the Paulicians in the 8th century, since the references which equate the two are polemical in character and only arise in later sources. As a result, explaining their origins necessitates a focus on the few reliable references provided by our sources, supplemented by the social, economic, and religious contexts of the area. Taken together, these suggest that the Paulicians who grew to prominence within Romanía had little continuity with earlier Armenian heretics of the same name and were instead the propagators of a new faith, albeit one that may have originated in the borderlands of western Armenia. Westward migration from Armenia in the 8th century was heterogeneous and resulted in the differentiation of groups, including some which were labelled as heterodox 'Paulicians', probably by other Armenians. This community perhaps owed its distinctiveness to the charismatic preaching of its religious leaders and/or divergent forms of communal organisation. Whether as cause, effect, or some combination of the two, their labelling as 'Paulicians' resulted in a quintessentially Pauline community, which revived the names of Paul's churches and

131 *Treatise*, 9, p. 85. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 94.

132 Shelley Matthews, *Perfect Martyr: The Stoning of Stephen and the Construction of Christian Identity* (New York/Oxford, 2010), pp. 58–77.

disciples and reimagined them in the present. At various points pastoralism, militarism, and the ethno-cultural diversity of the frontier played an important role in their growing influence, but the ability of their belief system to instil a sense of belonging among the provincials of Asia Minor was the most crucial contributing factor, insofar as this rendered it comprehensible and intuitive to outsiders, while also allowing it to incorporate elements from elsewhere or attune itself to particular settings. Such was the state of affairs when Sergios and Baanes confronted one another at the turn of the 9th century.

CHAPTER 5

Paulicians in the Face of Persecution *c.*800–845

Compared to the obscurity of the preceding period, information on the Paulicians throughout the 9th century is abundant, reflecting the anxieties they would pose during a turbulent period that would nonetheless see the Byzantine Empire's influence grow steadily at the expense of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate. At the century's outset, a loose network of Paulician communities had been established throughout Asia Minor and beyond, but besides its apostolic core there was little that was stable about Paulician identity, which would evolve throughout the period covered by this chapter. The primary axis around which these evolutions took place was the Paulicians' relationship with Roman authorities and, above all, periods of persecution during the reigns of Michael I, Leo V, and, some thirty years later, during the regency of Theodora. Despite the severity of these measures – our sources suggest a considerable body count – the Paulicians' prominence continued to rise, with the experience of persecution acting as a unifying factor that consolidated the Pauline core of their faith. For all that, Roman-Paulician interaction in the period is not simply one of violence and opposition. Evidence from Paulician sources implies that in the early years of the century relations between the two were relatively amicable and, when violence broke out, some Roman clerics opposed their punishment. Likewise, despite its misunderstanding of Paulician traditions, the *Treatise* suggests that Byzantine conceptions of the heresy became more accurate and nuanced over time, although the progress made was not startling.

Even though we now have a comparative wealth of sources at our disposal, the interpretive difficulties do not disappear entirely. Piecing together a reliable account of the actions of Sergios-Tychikos and his rivals is particularly tricky.[1] As noted in Chapter 3, the *Didaskalie* did not originally narrate Sergios' career and, although genuine Paulician material does seem to underpin the surviving account in the *History of the Paulicians*, there are indications that many episodes were invented by Peter of Sicily himself.[2] The most obvious example is Sergios' conversion by a Manichaean woman, which incorporates a slew of heresiological tropes that cannot conceivably derive from a Paulician

1 On Sergios' career, see also Teresa Wolińska, "Sergius, The Paulician Leader, in the Account by Peter of Sicily," *Studia Ceranea* 9 (2019), pp. 123–140.

2 On this, see also Appendix 1 and 2.

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exemplar.[3] Elsewhere, however, it is clear that Peter utilised some Paulician material. The origin of this is obviously conjectural, but it seems possible that a short postscript on Sergios' career followed the *Didaskalie*, or perhaps the *Letters of Sergios* had marginal notes that Peter used to compile his account. Whatever the truth of the matter, the inconsistences of the following narrative should demonstrate the deficiencies of the *History*'s account of the period. The chronology of events is doubtful throughout, but it seems that by the turn of the 9th century both Baanes and Sergios-Tychikos claimed spiritual authority over the entire Paulician community. While there are better grounds for upholding the historicity of Joseph-Epaphroditos than that of his predecessors, the date of his death is obscure. The *History* gives sufficient precisions to date Sergios' career from *c.*800/01-834/35, but it is unclear how long Baanes had claimed priority before him. Lemerle wisely showed circumspection and refused to date the beginning of Baanes' leadership precisely and, although I take his lead here, I would suggest that Sergios' rival went uncontested for a handful of years at most.[4] The *History* narrates the origins of the two in parallel:

> While [Joseph] was still alive, a woman disciple of his in Armenia, having had an adulterous relationship with a disciple of his, had a son, as they say, 'of the Hebrews', Baanes the Foul, famous for vice.
>
> This Baanes succeeded Aphronetus.[5] He preserved the heresy safe which he had received from his predecessors, full of impurity, and led many of the insensate to complete destruction, becoming himself the instructor in evil.
>
> Not much later another opponent of truth appeared in the neighbourhood of the city of Tavium, where there is a village named Annia, where lived a man name Druinos. He had a son named Sergios, the champion of the devil …[6]

3 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 135–147, ed. Denise Papachryssanthou, trans. Jean Gouillard, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 52–57. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), pp. 83–85.

4 Paul Lemerle, "L'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure d'après les sources grecques," *Travaux et mémoires* 5 (1973), pp. 69–70; 84.

5 Peter of Sicily's deprecatory nickname for Joseph-Epaphroditos.

6 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 130–132, pp. 50–51. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 83.

The passage is admittedly lacking in specifics, which undermines our ability to clarify the succession, particularly since the *History* never specifies the appointed successor of Joseph. The chronology must remain up for debate. Joseph died at Antioch in Pisidia, but we are not informed if either of the rivals resided there with him. The *History* tells us that although Joseph managed to escape when his community was surrounded at Episparis, his disciples were captured, which would imply that Baanes would have been taken too, if he had been born while Joseph-Epaphroditos was still resident within Mananalis, as his birthplace in Armenia suggests.[7] Perhaps Baanes reunited with Joseph later, since in the passage quoted below, where many of our chronological difficulties arise, he observes that he lived and studied alongside him:

> When Sergios began to teach, since he wanted to attract many disciples and detach them from the church of Christ, rather than have a few follow him, two and three times he stood face to face confronting Baanes, his corrupt fellow-disciple and fellow-initiate. Claiming piety, he began to attack him in the hearing of all, on the grounds not of belief, but the absurdity of his wicked acts.
>
> Baanes said to him: "You have appeared recently, you have never seen one of our teachers or stayed with him. I am a disciple of lord Epaphroditos and teach what he originally entrusted to me."
>
> Sergios was disgusted by the evil-smelling filth which Baanes taught, and shaming him to his face, split the heresy in two; those who stayed with Baanes he called Baniots, while [Baanes] called the disciples of Sergios Sergiots.
>
> After the death of Sergios, his disciples were unable to bear the shame and reproach which they received from all sides, and began to kill the Baniots, to eliminate the shame of the Baniots from themselves.
>
> Then one named Theodotus, a *synekdemos* of Sergios, said: "Let there be nothing between you and these men. We all had one faith until the appearance[8] of our teacher." So they ceased from slaughter.[9]

7 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 128, pp. 50–51. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 82.

8 *μέχρις ἀναδείξεως τοῦ διδασκάλου ἡμῶν*. The Hamiltons translate *ἀναδείξεως* as 'revelation'.

9 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 170–174, pp. 62–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 89–90.

At first sight, there are few problems in this passage; the issues only arise when it is read in conjunction with the material that follows. Immediately after the passage, the *History* goes on to recount the persecutions of Michael I and Leo V, followed by the Paulician reprisals, the misdated flight to Melitene, and finally Sergios' death.[10] Although the parameters of the conflict between the two rivals is never firmly established, the account implies that their hostility predated the persecutions and persisted even after Sergios' death. The problem is that when Sergios' death is recounted, neither the Baaniotes nor the massacres are mentioned. Tzanion, the murderer of Sergios, has no discernible connection to the Baaniotes, thereby making it unclear why the Sergiotes targeted them. Even more troublingly, since the *History* has Sergios' followers flee to Argaous following the persecutions, for the *History*'s account to make sense Baanes and his followers must also have fled to this region, despite their rivalry with Sergios' faction, since it is otherwise difficult to explain why they were slain in a fit of passionate grief. All of this defies easy explanation. The most likely solution is that Peter of Sicily's attempt to date the flight to Melitene thirty years before *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV has distorted this portion of his account. Consequently, the massacre of Baaniotes is difficult to substantiate historically; if it did happen, its causes and chronology may have differed from the above account.

Unfortunately, the geography of the passage is equally obscure. Since Baanes and Sergios held debates, they were clearly in close proximity on occasion, as the violence between their followers also suggests. Sergios' missionary activity was evidently peripatetic, as the man himself notes: "From east to west, north to south I ran, proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, having been weighed down to my knees."[11] As a result, it is possible that the two had different power bases and only came into contact on occasion. This fits with the *Letters of Sergios*, which imply that Sergios faced opposition from several sources. Peter of Sicily preserves several extracts of a letter to the Church of Koloneia in which Sergios implies that it was not under his jurisdiction. In a similar vein, his letter to the Leo the Montanist, who, despite his name, is probably a Paulician dissident, pleads against schism.[12] How either Leo or the

10 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 175–180, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 90–91.

11 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 153, pp. 56–57. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 86.

12 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 158–161; 166, pp. 58–63. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 87–89.

Church of Koloneia stood in relation to Baanes is unknown, but it is tempting to draw a geographical distinction that would place the traditionalist Baanes in the east and the reformer Sergios in the west. The geography of the passage is too obscure to substantiate this conclusion though; there is simply no indication that Baanes had greater success in areas with a longstanding Paulician presence. We should remember that some of the dichotomies inherent to Paulician identity, such as its pacific and militaristic tendencies, created contradictions that are difficult to reconcile. According to the *History*, for instance, the irenic Sergios had the most militaristic Paulicians, the *Astatoi* and the *Kynochoritae*, under his aegis. In light of this, it is perhaps most convincing to posit that factional lines were drawn for the reason that Baanes invoked: he upheld the ancestral traditions and Sergios reformed them. These innovations brought Sergios more in line with the established church; a process which may have contributed to the Paulicians' success in the early years of the century.

1 Nikephoros I and the Paulicians

Few things vexed Theophanes the Confessor as much as heresy and, in his eyes, its close cognate iconoclasm. One individual, however, stands out as a comparably incessant source of ire: Emperor Nikephoros I, the former General Logothete (a position roughly comparable with a finance minister) of Eirene, who overthrew his patron in a coup d'état in 801. Theophanes' favour for Eirene, or perhaps a personal grudge, may underlie this animosity, but its sheer vehemence is difficult to explain convincingly.[13] The chronicler's allegations of moral and financial misconduct have been questioned by modern historians, who have instead explained the fiscal exactions of Nikephoros' reign as an attempt to balance the books after Eirene's generous expenditure.[14] Among one of many accusations that Theophanes hurls at Nikephoros is that he supported the Athinganoi and Paulicians. Theophanes' enmity means we cannot take this claim at face value, but indications elsewhere suggest that Paulicians

13 See most recently Patricia Varona Codeso, Óscar Prieto Domínguez, "Three Clergymen against Nikephoros I: Remarks on Theophanes' Chronicle (AM 6295–6303)," *Byzantion* 84 (2014), pp. 485–510.

14 Leslie Brubaker, John F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 357, 720–721; 744–755.

may have received some degree of favour at the time. Theophanes' charge runs as follows:

> The emperor was an ardent friend of the Manichees (now called Paulicians) and of his close neighbours, the Athinganoi of Phrygia and Lykaonia, and delighted in their prophecies and rites. Indeed, he called them in when the patrician Bardanios rebelled against him and subjugated him by means of their magic. For he tied an ox by the horns to an iron stake in some sort of hollow and as the animal was bent to the ground, bellowing and writhing, he had it slaughtered and then ground the clothing of Bardanios in a mill with a contrary motion and performed certain incantations. As a result, he won a victory which God allowed because of the multitude of our sins. Those heretics were given leave during his reign to enjoy the rights of citizenship without fear so that many of the more frivolous kind became corrupted by their illicit doctrines.[15]

Upon further inspection, it seems that Nikephoros should be more closely associated with the Athinganoi than the Paulicians here, since the former are elsewhere characterised as astrologers and magicians similar to those implied by the passage, whereas this complaint is never levelled against the Paulicians.[16] In the case of Michael II, who was also allegedly a patron of the Athinganoi, the charge seems to arise mainly from his home city of Amorion, which lay in an area synonymous with them, but it is unclear whence the heretical allegations stem in Nikephoros' case, since his origins should be placed in either Isauria or Kappadokia.[17] Despite the polemical slant of the passage, it is worth taking seriously because Nikephoros sought to place the empire's fiscal-military apparatus on a more secure basis.[18] The Athinganoi and Paulicians could

15 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, ed. Carl de Boor, 2 vols, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1883), p. 488. English translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, eds. and trans. Cyril Mango, Roger Scott (Oxford, 1997), p. 671.

16 Joshua Starr, "An Eastern Christian Sect: The Athinganoi," *Harvard Theological Review* 29:2 (1936), pp. 101–104; Paul Speck, "Die vermeintliche Häresie der Athinganoi," *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 47 (1997), pp. 43–44.

17 In Byzantine sources his hometown is given as Seleukia in Isauria, whereas in Syriac sources he is considered a Kappadokian of Ghassanid descent. *The Patria: Accounts of Medieval Constantinople*, 3:153, ed. and trans. Albrecht Berger (Cambridge, MA, 2013), pp. 204–205; Michael the Syrian, *The Syriac Chronicle of Michael Rabo (the Great): A Universal History from the Creation*, 12:5, ed. and trans. Matti Moosa (Teaneck, 2014), p. 525.

18 Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 720–721; 744–755.

have been indirect beneficiaries of these reforms, whose aims Theophanes twisted to suit his purposes.

Other Byzantine sources fail to corroborate this picture, since, aside from Theophanes, we have no surviving references to Paulicians in Nikephoros' reign. Nevertheless, our Paulician sources hint at a time when their relationship with the Romans was not so fraught. The best indicator of this is the trajectory of Sergios' career. Baanes accused Sergios of innovating in matters of faith and this allegation is corroborated by our sources. We have already seen that in his letters Sergios used the Old and New Testaments in conjunction, in contravention of the precept attributed to Constantine-Silvanos that Paulicians should teach using only the Gospels and Pauline texts. Sergios' approach therefore seems to have diverged from Paulician norms to become more in line with the religious practices of the Byzantine Church. In a similar vein, several of his pastoral letters aspire towards a more unified and perhaps more doctrinally homogeneous Paulician community. His letter to the Church of Koloneia in particular seeks to expand the reach of his confession.[19] Besides this, we must note a passage we have already discussed frequently: Sergios' complaints about the aggression of his followers: "I am innocent of these evils, for many times I told them to desist from taking Romans prisoner and they did not listen to me."[20] It cannot be securely contextualised, so it is unclear if the practice of seizing prisoners was conducted in reprisal for Roman persecutions, or beforehand. The latter is perhaps more plausible, since assassinations and executions seem a more probable response to a campaign of persecution and this indeed is how the *History* presents matters.[21] Yet irrespective of when we place the hostage taking to which Sergios refers, his sentiments suggest that he sought good relations with the empire if possible. His approach seems to have been rather more ecclesiastical than we would expect, thereby implying that he brought Paulician practices into line with Byzantine norms. This approach seems to have put him at loggerheads with Baanes and his followers on the one hand and more martial Paulicians on the other.

In other words, it seems that Paulician and Roman religious practices were converging during Sergios' ministry, which may well imply a more amicable relationship than the later history of violence would lead us to believe. If so,

19 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 158–161, pp. 58–61. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 87–88.

20 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 157, pp. 58–59. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 87.

21 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 177, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 90.

then Nikephoros may indeed have favoured the Paulicians and, more importantly, the approach may have been working, since their integration into Byzantine society seems to have been deepening. In the previous chapter, we saw that the similarity of their scriptural preferences to those of contemporary Christians may have made them more disposed to adopt influences from elsewhere and this tendency is certainly at work in the person of Sergios. Given our meagre evidence it may be a step too far to attribute this proposed rapprochement to Nikephoros specifically; Sergios' innovations may have arisen through purely endogenous factors and it is unclear whether Paulicians who did not accept his authority were also growing more disposed to Roman institutions. Still, it seems that the persecuting impulse which followed Nikephoros' death was not a necessary development; a conciliatory policy was both possible and workable.

We must note, however, that Byzantine understandings of Paulician faith and identity were in their infancy. While much of the above indicates a sympathetic attitude, other evidence points to developments in the opposite direction. It is in this period that the Paulicians are first encountered in Roman sources, polemically branded as the "Manichaeans, now called Paulicians" in the hostile account of Theophanes. As Ludwig has noted, the fact that Theophanes uses both terms in conjunction implies that their equivalence had not yet been accepted, which in turn implies that the polemical project was a relatively new one.[22] All in all, these contrasting portrayals suggest that the process of differentiation whereby the categories of Paulician and Roman diverged was still a work in progress. In many cases, it is the heretic who conforms closest to established practices that provokes most apprehension within societies, for the simple reason that they are often indistinguishable from the prevailing orthodoxy and thereby attract converts most readily. Paulician doctrine and praxis under Sergios may have posed precisely this challenge.[23] We must not forget that by this time the scriptural canon that the Paulicians had adopted was increasingly similar to orthodox usage, yet instead of upholding a vision of the world that was Roman and imperial, its focus was spiritual, Pauline, and non-hierarchical. In other words, although they spoke a similar religious language to contemporary Byzantines, their underlying message differed from this and potentially

22 Claudia Ludwig, "The Paulicians and Ninth-Century Byzantine Thought," in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?,* ed. Leslie Brubaker (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 31–32.

23 The dynamic I envisage is similar to that described by William E. Arnal, "Doxa, Heresy, and Self-Construction: The Pauline *Ekklēsiai* and the Boundaries of Urban Identities," in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, eds. Eduard Iricinschi, Holger M. Zellentin (Tübingen, 2008), pp. 50–101.

had the capacity to subvert it. It is likely that this was only imperfectly understood by Roman authorities, whether sympathetic to the Paulicians or not, at this time, but as the success of the new movement grew contemporaries were forced to take notice of its inroads into orthodoxy. A series of military defeats and an atmosphere of heightened religious tension brought matters to a head in the early 810s, by which time some Byzantine elites despised Paulicians with a scarcely concealed ferocity. A regime change following the death of Nikephoros at Pliska would be enough to see them persecuted.

2 The Persecutions of Michael I and Leo V

Aside from the later persecution during Theodora's regency, there is perhaps no more epochal event in Paulician history than the persecutions which were conducted, then halted, by Michael I and subsequently reimposed by his successor Leo V. Although sometimes considered an attack on the Paulicians specifically, the persecution also encompassed the Athinganoi and, somewhat more doubtfully, the Jews.[24] The sudden about-faces in policy which characterise these events suggests a highly charged religio-political context, as is natural given they took place against the backdrop of catastrophic defeats against the Bulgars and the restoration of iconoclasm. Some indication of the religious tumult is given by Theophanes' contemporary account of these years, which saw him fixate on both Paulicians and iconoclasm. As we saw in the previous chapter, when an iconoclast mob opened Constantine V's tomb to beseech his aid, Theophanes slandered them by association with Paulicians, whereas an attempt to bring Constantine's sons to the throne was blamed on the "Paulicians and Athinganoi, Iconoclasts and Tetradites."[25] In fact, we can safely dismiss his paranoia of a malign alliance out of hand, since if the Paulicians and Athinganoi were really so crucial to the return of iconoclasm the new iconoclast emperor Leo V would hardly persecute them. Separating

24 The persecutions have received surprisingly little attention in existing literature. See Nina G. Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy* (Paris/The Hague, 1967), pp. 124–125; Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 71–72; Venance Grumel, *Les regestes des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*, vol. 1, fasc. 2 (Paris, 1936), p. 27; Theodoros Korres, "Οἱ διώξεις τῶν Παυλικιάνων ἐπί Μιχαὴλ Α'," *Byzantina* 10 (1980), pp. 203–215.

25 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 501, l. 3–25. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 684–685; Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 496, l. 8–16. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 679.

rhetoric and reality is not, however, always so easy in the case of the persecutions, so it is useful to set out the basics here.

If the *Chronographia*'s reconstruction is chronologically accurate, the persecution began soon after Michael's accession, in late 811, or early 812.[26] Since Michael's rule only lasted from October 811 until June 813, the measures lasted a little over a year at the longest estimate. Theophanes claims that the persecution was curtailed by the opposition of "perverse counsellors," the foremost among whom was Theodore the Stoudite, but several of Theodore's letters, together with the testimony of the *History*, show that Michael's successor Leo V reintroduced it.[27] The surviving evidence is inadequate for dating Leo's renewed persecution, although it seems to stem from relatively early in his reign.[28] The underlying motives for these actions are more conjectural, but a number of overlapping factors stand out. On the one hand, the prominence and activity of the Athinganoi and Paulicians led them to be considered threats, but it also seems that the climate of fear brought about by ongoing religious controversies, political disturbances, and military woes caused some amount of scapegoating. Krum's stunning victories over the empire have been interpreted as an impetus to persecution, whereas the banishment and imprisonment of Theodore the Stoudite and his brother Joseph, Archbishop of Thessalonika, during the Moechian Controversy shows that Roman actors were far from averse to using intimidation or threats to address religious matters in the early years of the century.[29] The fraught atmosphere within Michael I's Constantinople, which Theophanes' account captures vividly, must have played a role, particularly given the ascendancy of iconoclast sentiments

26 In the timeline of the *Chronographia*, the persecutions are placed between the crowning of Michael's son Theophylaktos on December 25 811 and the deposed emperor Staurakios' death on January 11 812. Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, pp. 494–495. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 678; Grumel, *Les regestes*, vol. 1, fasc. 2, p. 27. Korres, by contrast, argues that the persecutions date from the end of Michael's reign. Korres, "Οἱ διώξεις," pp. 213–214.

27 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 498, l. 19–20. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 678. Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 175, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 90. Theodore the Stoudite, *Theodori Studitae epistulae*, *Ep.* 94, ed. Georgios Fatouros, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1992), p. 214.

28 Theodore the Stoudite's letter to Leo the spice dealer, which alludes to measures against the Paulicians in Leo's reign, is conventionally dated to 815–818, but this does not give sufficient grounds for a more precise dating. Theodore the Stoudite, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 94, vol. 2, p. 214.

29 Paul J. Alexander, "Religious Persecution and Resistance in the Byzantine Empire of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Methods and Justifications," *Speculum* 52:2 (1977), pp. 244–245.

within the capital. In the case of both Michael and Leo, it seems that persecution of the Athinganoi and Paulicians, the most prominent heterodoxies of the day, was intended to deflect the tensions surrounding the image controversy onto figures that iconodules and iconoclasts might consider a common enemy. It appears, furthermore, that persecution aimed to restore the empire's standing in the divine order. While exhorting Theophilos of Ephesos against advocating violence against the Paulicians, Theodore the Stoudite notes that he told Michael I: "God was not pleased on account of such a slaying," thereby implying that divine favour was a consideration for this emperor, whereas this motive is also fitting for Leo, where it would represent a logical extension of his reintroduction of iconoclasm.[30] Besides these motives, the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn meant that the empire had a freer hand than usual to impose political and religious authority in Asia Minor. The church's reach within the peninsula had been weak for some time owing to the lack of effective ecclesiastical infrastructure, but this deficiency was being redressed as the 8th and 9th centuries progressed.[31] This success was built on the surprising resilience of the empire at this time since, despite a crisis of confidence in religious and military affairs, the economic and structural fundamentals remained sound, thus presaging the recovery which would continue throughout the 9th century.[32] The picture is therefore one of perceived weakness in the ideological sphere masking an underlying strength on the ground; a combination which explains why a measure as drastic as persecution could be effectively implemented despite the empire stumbling from one crisis to another.

Although the above concatenation of factors informed the backdrop to persecution, the more immediate cause came from the Patriarch of Constantinople Nikephoros I, whom we have already met as the author of the *Breviarum* and *Third Antirrhetikos*. In theory at least, the prosecution of heresy requires collaboration between the secular and ecclesiastical arms of government, but persecution has traditionally been seen as a secular preserve, which was sometimes aimed at ecclesiastics themselves.[33] In the case of the Paulicians, however, the primary impulse for their persecution seems to have come from within the church hierarchy. The patriarch Nikephoros was firmly

30 Theodore the Stoudite, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 455, vol. 2, p. 647, l. 86.

31 John F. Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640–740* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), pp. 105–107; Michel Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VIe au XIe siècle: propriété et exploitation du sol* (Paris, 1992), pp. 202–203.

32 Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 365; 561.

33 The iconomachy holds noted examples, even if the extent is no doubt exaggerated. See Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 234–247.

under the thumb of his namesake emperor, but after the demise of the latter and the deposition of his paralyzed son Staurakios the churchman wielded rather more influence over the indecisive Michael I.[34] Our only two sources to allude to the motives behind the persecution, Theophanes' *Chronographia* and Ignatios the Deacon's *Vita Nicephori*, both agree in considering Nikephoros the ultimate instigator.[35] The account of the *Chronographia* is as follows:

> Moved by an excess of divine zeal, the most pious emperor [Michael I], at the instigation of the most holy patriarch Nikephoros and other pious persons, decreed the death penalty against the Manichees (that is the Paulicians of today) and the Athinganoi who live in Phrygia and Lykaonia, but was turned back from this course by certain perverse counsellors who used the pretext of repentance, although those who have fallen into that error are incapable of repenting. The counsellors argued in their ignorance that priests ought not to condemn the impious to death, being in this respect in complete contradiction to Holy Scripture. For if Peter, the chief apostle, put Ananias and Sapphira to death for nothing more than a lie; if the great Paul cries out saying "They which commit such things are worthy of death"; and this with reference to bodily sin only; does it not follow that those who deliver from the sword persons that are filled with every manner of spiritual and bodily impurity and are worshippers of demons stand in contradiction to the apostles? Even so, the pious emperor Michael executed not a few of those heretics.[36]

The *Vita Nicephori* complements Theophanes' account by focusing on Nikephoros' role in events:

> Therefore, zeal motivated him [Nikephoros] to turn his steps in a different direction, against the unbelieving and outlandish heresies which just then were celebrating their abominable rituals without a blush of shame for their own mad folly – I am referring to Jews, and Phrygians, and those

34 Paul J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople: Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 73–75.

35 For the *Vita Nicephori*, see also Ihor Ševčenko, "The Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period," in *Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, eds. Anthony Bryer, Judith Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), pp. 123–125.

36 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, pp. 494–95. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 678.

> who followed the oversubtle arguments of Mani and drank the potion of his unbelief. For that reason Nikephoros presented a written document to the emperor outlining the basic tenets of their unnatural religion in great detail and explaining how these tenets would maim the whole society if these sects were allowed to continue doing as they wished. He demonstrated all this in the treatise, reproaching the Jews for slaying the Lord, assailing the monstrous sophistry of the Phrygians, and striking a serious blow against the hallucination of the Manichaeans, so that the pollution of these groups would not proceed out of their mouths, but rather their guileful nonsense would be only whispered in obscure secrecy. For if the impious had been deprived of free speech by the authorities, they would have been unable to do anything even in secret.[37]

Unsurprisingly given their contrasting emphases, there are several differences between the two accounts, some inconsequential and some which merit further attention. Although both present Nikephoros as the architect of the affair, the *Vita Nicephori* states that he wrote a tome about the heresies in question which is not mentioned in the *Chronographia*.[38] Such a work is not now extant, nor is it referenced in later polemical texts. Nonetheless, Nikephoros' works had a very limited circulation in his own day and disappeared entirely for a time, only to reappear in the 14th century, so the fate of this text is not appreciably different from his other works.[39] A second discrepancy in our accounts is rather more troubling: the identity of the heretics targeted. While Theophanes alludes to only the Athinganoi and Paulicians, Ignatios the Deacon also includes Jews. Ignatios, writing perhaps in the 840s, is, however, a later witness and when Jews were targeted in our period they were usually subject to forced conversions. It seems unlikely that they were included in the original measures

37 Ignatios the Deacon, *Nicephori archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica*, ed. Carl de Boor (Leipzig, 1880), pp. 158–159. English translation: "Life of the Patriarch Nikephoros I of Constantinople," in *Byzantine Defenders of Images*, trans. Elizabeth A. Fisher, ed. Alice-Mary Talbot (Washington, D.C., 1998), p. 65.

38 Note that in Nikephoros' *Third Antirrhetikos*, the patriarch presents the law as the final arbiter of the Paulicians' fate, rather than emphasising his own agency. However, while attempting to persuade Theophilos of Ephesos of the impropriety of persecution, Theodore the Stoudite notes his complaints to Nikephoros, as well as Michael I and Leo V, suggesting he thought the patriarch was as complicit as the latter figures. See Nikephoros, *Third Antirrhetikos*, 68, *Patrologia Graeca* 100, col. 501; Theodore the Stoudite, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 455, vol. 2, p. 647, l. 83–85.

39 Dmitri Afinogenov, "The Date of Georgios Monachos Reconsidered," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 92 (1999), p. 444.

and, even if they were, they were surely subject to different procedures and punishments.

Still, the fact that this persecution did not target Paulicians alone complicates its interpretation considerably. Our accounts do not specify whether Nikephoros ever suggested appropriate penalties for the groups involved, but it seems possible that he advocated capital punishment in the Paulicians' case at least. Their description in secondary sources suggests that their association with Manichaeans was only beginning to become established around the time of the persecutions. Theophanes' tendency to refer to them as "The Manichaeans, now called Paulicians," implies the equivalence of the two terms was not yet firmly ingrained, as does Theodore the Stoudite's use of both descriptors during the 810s and 820s.[40] Since persecution generally proceeded from the legal precedent that Manichaeans were subject to the death penalty, it is possible that Nikephoros first equated the two in his tome. If this were the case, it would logically follow that the Athinganoi and, if they were truly encompassed by the measures, the Jews would be subject to punishments of a different kind. This hypothesis receives some corroboration in the sources. After their implication in the attempt to restore Constantine V's blinded sons (around June-August 812), Michael I had the future Leo V, then the general of the Anatolikon thema, subject the Athinganoi to confiscation and banishment, presumably to the empire's European provinces.[41] It is unclear whether this occurred after the persecutions had been halted or not, but the reference implies that the Athinganoi may have been subject to lesser punishments than the Paulicians. In a similar vein, the two letters of Theodore the Stoudite which allude to the persecutions lament the fate of the Paulicians without specifying other groups, which implies that they suffered the brunt of the measures.[42] In both instances, Theodore is keen to stress that it is not proper for the church to wield a sword. As the Athinganoi occupy a similar prominence to the Paulicians in the *Chronographia* during these years, it seems that the

40 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 488, l. 22–24. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 671; Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 495, l. 1–2. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 678; Theodore the Stoudite, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 94, vol. 2, p. 215, l. 11; *Ep*. 455, vol. 2, p. 645, l. 10–16; Ludwig, "The Paulicians," pp. 31–32.

41 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 497, l. 4–6. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 680; Peter Charanis, "Ethnic Changes in the Byzantine Empire in the Seventh Century," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 13 (1959), p. 27.

42 The emphasis on the Paulicians is maintained in secondary literature. See, for instance, Ludwig, "The Paulicians," pp. 23–35; Korres, "Οἱ διώξεις," pp. 203–215; Alexander, "Religious Persecution," pp. 252–253; 262–263.

latter provoked his sympathy because they suffered the most extreme penalties. Whatever the truth of this, Theodore's opposition to punishment eventually convinced both Nikephoros and Michael to curtail these measures and, although he made a similar attempt to win over Leo V, it is doubtful if he was successful in this case.[43] Since the iconophile Nikephoros was deposed after Leo's restoration of iconoclasm, he evidently had nothing to do with this second wave of afflictions. The persecution of Leo's reign is poorly documented, so it is impossible to determine its chronological parameters or the groups at which it aimed. As noted above, he had himself been entrusted with the banishment of the Athinganoi, so he at least had personal experience of the issues involved. Theodore notes that the emperor demanded "a defence for the slaying" from him, which implies that Leo was set on a reckoning, but we should not forget that his suppression of iconophiles seems to have been a last resort.[44] Quite frankly, there is limited merit in stressing the agency of one individual or another in a period when most saw the sword as the best solution available.

Beyond the remarks made above, the extant evidence is not sufficient to determine what the legal justifications were for these persecutions, whether the correct procedure was followed, or whether rhetoric matched reality. Theodore the Stoudite aside, our sources approve of these measures, perhaps indicating general support in both ecclesiastical and secular circles. If the policy were of dubious popularity it seems doubtful that Leo V would have reintroduced it. Unfortunately, we also lack trustworthy information on how persecution was enacted. The *History of the Paulicians*, our sole witness, seems unreliable once more. It states that the two officials responsible were Thomas, Bishop of Neocaesarea and the *exarch* Parakondakes, neither of whom are attested elsewhere.[45] The latter, whose name literally means 'the harrier', appears to be a figment of Peter of Sicily's polemical imagination.[46] In the later persecution of Theodora, imperial officials orchestrated the affair and the same may

43 Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 498, l. 19–20. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 678; Theodore the Stoudite, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 455, vol. 2, p. 647, l. 82–85. On Theodore's efforts, see also Hieromonk Patapios, "St. Theodore the Studite and the Problem of the Paulicians," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 43:1–4 (1998), pp. 143–154.

44 *Vita Nicetae Medicii*, 33–35, in *Acta Sanctorum*, April 1, pp. 261–262; Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 368–385.

45 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 176–177, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 90.

46 For the associated verb *παρακονδακίζω*, see Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 358, l. 30 – p. 359, l. 2. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 499.

have been true in this case. Some participation from the provincial armies is probable, given that Leo was general of the Anatolikon army when he relocated the Athinganoi. As for the form that the persecutions took, the sources suggest little more than a series of executions or massacres, but the relocation of the Athinganoi must complicate this picture. The primary emphasis of both the *Chronographia* and the *History of the Paulicians* is on the slain rather than the penitent or imprisoned. It is difficult to shake the image of a short-lived, but indiscriminate, affair, which targeted large swathes of Asia Minor. Much of the difficulty in nuancing this picture arises because we simply do not know how Paulicians were identified by the authorities. If the legal framework and coercive apparatus of persecution were imposed on provincial Asia Minor by Constantinopolitan institutions which had little understanding of conditions on the ground, then we must expect the reality was stark and brutal, particularly if identification took place on a communal basis. This, at any rate, seems to have been the case during Theodora's persecution in the 840s.

3 The Paulician Response: Early Resistance and the Revolt of Thomas the Slav

The punishment and death of so many of their number must have affected the Paulicians profoundly. The best indication of this is, of course, the *Didaskalie* itself. Written in the aftermath of these persecutions, it reenvisaged Paulician history as a continuous struggle against oppression from a hostile Roman Empire. I have argued elsewhere that by reappropriating the rhetoric of suffering in Acts, Sergios and his collaborators presented persecution in a manner that was intuitive to a wider Paulician community while also reasserting the essentially apostolic character of their faith. In fact, its underlying emphases are so convincing that I believe narratives of this kind may have arisen among ordinary Paulician adherents before being coopted by the Sergiote party.[47] Insofar as these narratives were based on widely known scriptural texts, they could appeal to those within the Paulician community and attract converts from those outside it, particularly if the persecutions were indiscriminate enough to alienate, or even target, others. To some degree, this underlies the Paulicians' successful response to persecution in the following decades, since they continued to expand and prosper, whereas the prominence of

47 Carl Dixon, "Paulician Self-Defence and Self-Definition in the *Didaskalie*," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 63 (2019), pp. 73–74.

the Athinganoi steadily recedes. This obviously cannot be attributed to the *Didaskalie* alone. Other factors, including changes in the practice of their faith, may have contributed to their success at this time. Many may have fled to areas further removed from imperial power or practiced their beliefs underground. In several places the *Treatise* bemoans their habit of concealing their beliefs and evading orthodox lines of questioning and, although we cannot always take these complaints at face value, in some cases they seem to be adaptations to conceal themselves during this period of acute danger.

The form of response usually associated with the Paulicians is not, however, concealment, but to take up arms. In this period, the source which tells us of this practice is the *History of the Paulicians*. In Chapter 1, I argued that the *History*'s account of an early alliance with the Emirate of Melitene cannot be sustained. It is now time to substantiate this more fully by examining Paulician resistance against the empire during this period, beginning with the *History*'s account:

> The pious emperor Michael the abbot and Leo, his successor, seeing that this sort of heresy had defiled a large part of the Christians, sent out the order into all parts of the Roman Empire and killed those who were involved in this foul heresy. And so the order of the emperor came to the Armeniakon, to Thomas, the bishop of Neocaesarea, and Parakondakes, who was the *exarch*. So in obedience to the emperor's order, they killed those whom they found, on the grounds that they deserved death and were the guides to destruction. But later some of the students of Sergios, the so-called *Astatoi*, slaughtered the *exarch* by means of cunning and trickery and the *Kynochoritae* likewise slew Thomas the Metropolitan. Thus, the *Astatoi* fled to Melitene. The emir Monocherares then ruled the Saracens living there. Taking Argaous from him, the *Astatoi* settled there, and having assembled from all parts they began to plunder Romania.[48]

Given the manifest untrustworthiness of the *History* on several points, some scepticism is required, but certain aspects of the above seem believable. Notably, Sergios complained about his followers taking Byzantine prisoners around this time, so it seems likely that some Paulicians retaliated in kind. As noted in previous chapters, however, the geopolitical situation in Asia Minor in the following decades shows conclusively that the Paulicians were not yet

48 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 175–178, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 90.

a significant presence around Melitene during these years, nor were they in a position to raid the empire, thereby implying that any reprisals must have been limited in scale. Still, the possibility of a limited Paulician presence in the no-man's land merits our attention here because there are undeniable indications that their activity in the area predated Karbeas' flight.

Most pointedly, the early 9th century saw a power vacuum in eastern Asia Minor caused by the preoccupation of the empire and caliphate elsewhere. After the highpoint of Islamic raiding during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd, the civil war between his sons halted further incursions until al-Ma'mūn's campaign of 830. For much of the intervening period Roman power in the region was ephemeral, not only due to the campaigns of the Bulgars in the Balkans, but also because of the revolt of Thomas the Slav, which preoccupied Michael II for the early years of his reign. As a result, the *History*'s claim that Paulicians established themselves in the no-man's land along the Anti-Taurus range at this time seems credible. However, it is seriously undermined by Thomas' invasion and campaigning practices in the region during the reign of Michael II's son Theophilos.

Thomas the Slav is a shadowy, yet fascinating, personality, as well as a rare analogue for the defection of Karbeas, since he too transferred his allegiance from empire to caliphate. Although Thomas' onslaught is commonly interpreted as a rebellion against the empire, it is more appropriately understood as an Islamic invasion, given the extensive manpower and matériel support that he received from al-Ma'mūn.[49] Medieval understandings of Thomas' actions are confused, perhaps as a result of his conflation with Thomas the Armenian, who was an associate of both Leo V and Michael II.[50] Genesios and the Continuator each give two accounts of his rebellion and both considered the first more trustworthy. Modern historians have traditionally favoured the second, but recent research by Signes Codoñer suggests that our primary sources are correct in considering the following version more plausible, although a synthesis of the two perhaps gives the best solution.[51] According to

49 Signes Codoñer argues that al-Ma'mūn did so. Juan Signes Codoñer, *The Emperor Theophilos and the East, 829–842: Court and Frontier in Byzantium during the Last Phase of Iconoclasm* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 45–52. For contrary perspectives, see Paul Lemerle, "Thomas le Slave," *Travaux et mémoires* 1 (1965), pp. 285–287; Helga Köpstein, "Zur Erhebung des Thomas," in *Studien zum 8. und 9. Jahrhundert in Byzanz*, eds. Helga Köpstein, Friedhelm Winkelmann (Berlin, 1983), p. 73.

50 Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos*, pp. 194–196.

51 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 2:2–9, eds. Anni Lesmüller-Werner, Hans P. Thurn, (Berlin/New York, 1978), pp. 23–32. English translation: *Genesios. On the Reigns of the Emperors*, ed. Anthony Kaldellis (Canberra, 1998), pp. 28–39; Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur Libri I-IV*, 2:9–20, eds.

the first version, Thomas fled from Constantinople during the reign of Eirene after being discovered committing adultery with his master's wife. Having journeyed to the caliphate, he apostatised and lived in obscurity for decades. However, in 819, Thomas gained command of an army and rebelled against Leo V, claiming to be either the same Constantine VI who had been blinded by his mother Eirene in 797, or Constantine's son.[52] Although the reason why Thomas received this support is not documented by either source, this is probably connected with the end of the strife which had plagued the caliphate ever since the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd in 809, as al-Ma'mūn finally gained possession of Baghdād in 819. As Signes Codoñer argues, this lack of infighting allowed al-Ma'mūn to reopen hostilities with the empire and he did so by providing Thomas with troops. The caliph had other difficulties to address and his use of independent military leaders to combat his enemies is representative of his strategy elsewhere.[53] Soon after Thomas' incursion began, Leo V was murdered in a conspiracy involving the future Michael II, who was at the time awaiting death for plotting against Leo. Thomas, for his part, continued his struggle against the newly crowned Michael, traversing Asia Minor and threatening the capital for several years. Despite gaining the better of the opening engagements, the tide of war slowly turned against him. He was eventually captured and executed in 823, after a protracted siege of Constantinople that Michael broke with the aid of the Bulgar Khan Omurtag, who was bound to the empire by a treaty brokered by Leo in 815.[54]

A number of questions remain unanswered about Thomas' rebellion, such as his policy on icons, the truth of his alleged apostasy, and his relationship with al-Ma'mūn, but, for our purposes, the invasion is most interesting due to the composition of Thomas' army. Both Genesios and the Continuator list the contingents that he led and both mention Manichaeans, that is to say,

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J. Michael Featherstone, Juan Signes Codoñer (Boston/Berlin, 2015), pp. 76–107; Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos,* pp. 183–189; Lemerle, "Thomas le Slave," pp. 258–259; 283–284; Köpstein, "Zur Erhebung des Thomas," pp. 67–72. The convincing aspects of version A are that it places Thomas' rebellion in the reign of Leo V and posits significant Islamic involvement. By contrast, in version B Thomas was leader of the Phoideratoi of the Anatolikon thema and rebelled against Michael II after Leo V's death and hence may not have had Islamic support. The most appealing part of this account is that Thomas' rank renders his leadership of an army more understandable.

52 For assigning Thomas' rebellion to the end of Leo V's reign, see Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos,* pp. 40–45; Afinogenov, "The Date of Georgios," pp. 446–447. Contrariwise, see Lemerle, "Thomas le Slave," p. 258; Köpstein, "Zur Erhebung," p. 70.

53 Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos,* pp. 196–200; 212–214.

54 Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 384; 387.

Paulicians, among them.[55] However, unlike these 10th-century works, contemporary accounts of Thomas' rebellion make no such reference. The ultimate source of both historians' lists is the letter of Michael II to Louis the Pious, which states that Thomas' army was composed of "Saracens, Persians, Iberians, Armenians, Abasgians, and other foreign peoples," as is appropriate for an army garnered by the caliphate.[56] Both 10th-century historians list a greater range of peoples. Here I have provided the Continuator's account, which is shorter than Genesios' archaising list:

> … Hagarenes, our neighbours on the borders, but also those dwelling further, Egyptians, Indians, Persians, Assyrians, Armenians, Chaldeans, Iberians, Zechians, Kabeirans and all those who followed the doctrines and decrees of Manes …[57]

This list is fanciful and has been criticized elsewhere, with the Paulician presence doubted particularly by Lemerle and Barnard.[58] Given the lack of reference to Paulicians in Michael II's contemporary letter, it seems safe to disavow their involvement in this rebellion. Since allusions to them only arise during historians of Constantine VII's reign, it seems that once again the 10th-century reinvention of the Paulicians has projected their influence back onto earlier periods. Even if we were to accept their presence among Thomas' supporters, this still does not corroborate the *History*'s version of events, since rather than raiding the empire themselves, they would be only one group among many in the pretender's army. In other words, irrespective of how we interpret the reputed Paulician presence in Thomas' army, it seems clear that they did not operate independently at this time. This in turn implies that even in a period when their agency was felt less keenly in Asia Minor, the great powers of empire and caliphate were still strong enough to keep abreast of matters

55 See also Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos*, pp. 45–52.

56 Michael II, "Epistula ad Ludovicum Imperatorem," ed. Alfred Werminghoff, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Leges* III, *Concilia* II, *Concilia Karolini Aevi* 2 (Hannover/Leipzig, 1908), p. 476.

57 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 2:12, pp. 82–83. Genesios also lists Abasians, Alans, Huns, Lazoi, Slavs, Getae, and Vandals. Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 2:2, p. 24, l. 17–21. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 29–30.

58 Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 83. A similar view is expressed by Barnard. Leslie W. Barnard, "The Paulicians and Iconoclasm," in *Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, eds. Anthony Bryer, Judith Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), p. 80.

along the frontier. All indications suggest that the overt support of one party or another was necessary for the Paulicians to become a significant presence in the area, as in the case of Karbeas' alliance with 'Amr al-Aqṭa'. As a result, the reprisals mentioned by the *History* during this time were probably localised and small in scale.

Besides Thomas' rebellion, there are precious few references to Paulicians in Michael II's reign, which makes it difficult to determine his policy regarding them. He is often accused of being an Athinganos by our sources, but this doubtful allegation only arises in later sources and should have no bearing on our analysis here.[59] Taking into account Thomas' hold on the eastern provinces during the early years of his rule, it may be that Michael lacked the ability to enforce policy in the areas where Paulicians were primarily located. Only one source sheds light, albeit indirectly, on persecution during the reign. This is Theodore the Stoudite's letter to Theophilos of Ephesos, which shows that some iconodule bishops still favoured persecuting Paulicians during the 820s. The letter, which is conventionally dated between 821 and 826, is devoted entirely to Theophilos' cautious approval of capital punishment, which came to Theodore's attention via the intermediary of their mutual acquaintance Athanasios.[60] The most apposite passage reads as follows:

> What is this thing in your writing, which causes me grief? It says: "We have neither counselled that Manichaeans should be killed nor not be killed, but if we did allow it, we would devote ourselves to doing the best of fine things." What are you saying, most honoured by God? The Lord forbade this in the Gospels, saying "No, lest in collecting the weeds you uproot the grain along with them. Let them grow together until the harvest."[61]

Despite being in office under Michael II, Theophilos was an iconodule bishop, yet he still tentatively favoured the persecution of Paulicians. Since he originally expressed this view privately to Athanasios, it does not follow that this was official policy. In fact, indications in the letter suggest it was not. At the end of the letter, Theodore alludes to his opposition to persecution under previous emperors:

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59 Speck, "Die vermeintliche Häresie," pp. 38–44; Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 2:3–7, pp. 66–73.

60 There are difficulties with identifying this Athanasios. See Ralph-Johannes Lilie et al., *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit. Erste Abteilung* (*641–867*), 6 vols, vol. 1 (Berlin/New York, 1999–2002), #675; #676, pp. 217–219.

61 Theodore the Stoudite, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 455, vol. 2, p. 645, l. 10–16.

> And thus, master, we, worthless as we are, consider the matter. Indeed, lest I be accused of speaking in folly, we spoke freely to our most blessed patriarch [Nikephoros] that "the church does not punish with a sword" and he granted this. Also, we spoke to those emperors who accomplished the slaughter, to the first [Michael I] that "God was not pleased on account of such a slaying" and to the second [Leo V], the one who demanded a defence for the slaying, that "sooner would my head be taken than I would agree to this." These things, then, were done on account of our sins. But you, most holy man, if you read another gospel, which we do not know, hold to it well, but if not, regard what the apostle revealed.[62]

Since Theodore complained to Nikephoros, Michael, and Leo we would expect this principled and outspoken abbot to have also implored Michael II if he too had instigated a crackdown. The most likely explanation is that Michael did not do so, which is why the disagreement between Theodore and Theophilos is presented as an inter-iconodule affair throughout the letter; although Theodore mentions the ascendant *iconomachoi* at the outset, he never accuses Theophilos of siding with them on the matter of punishment. The evidence here is far from conclusive, particularly because Theophilos' language is so evasive, but it seems that Michael II made no attempt to enforce the punishments laid down by his predecessors if they remained legally in force. Whether this is because he lacked the capacity or the inclination must remain conjectural, but he seems possessed of a greater religious tolerance than many. Even Genesios acknowledges that he let people do as they please regarding icons.[63] We must be cautious given the paucity of sources, but it seems that Michael's reign may have been one of toleration.

4 Paulicians in the Reign of Theophilos

Both Theodore and the patriarch Nikephoros, two of our most valuable sources for the early 9th century, would die in exile during Michael's reign. The emperor himself expired in 829 and was succeeded by his son Theophilos, an energetic commander and convinced iconoclast whose reign attests a more ambivalent relationship with the Paulicians. On the one hand, the death penalty rears its head once more and, although this was probably not systematically enforced

62 Theodore the Stoudite, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 455, vol. 2, p. 647, l. 82–91.

63 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 2:14, p. 35. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. 42.

by the regime, perhaps surprisingly given Theophilos' penchant for upholding justice, several sources testify to Roman punishment of Paulicians. On the other hand, Karbeas's occupation of an important post in the army of the Anatolikon by Theophilos' death suggests that there were opportunities for Paulicians to prosper during these years, while the emperor's patronage of Khurramite rebels from the caliphate shows that he could be favourable to militaristic dualists. To some degree, these contradictions reflect the reality that Theophilos was more active in areas synonymous with Paulicians than his predecessors and that a greater number of sources survive regarding his rule. Still, it also seems we have before us a transitional period where the Paulicians' prominence grew steadily, despite uncoordinated attempts to forestall this. Most intriguingly of all, while they had not yet established the raiding centres which would later prove such a thorn in the empire's side by Theophilos' reign, there are indications that their presence on the eastern frontier was becoming more prominent, thereby setting the scene for Karbeas' defection during Theodora's regency.

Only once source directly attests the persecution of Paulicians during Theophilos' reign: the *Vita Macarii Peleketae*, an account of the life of Makarios, abbot of the Pelekete Monastery, composed by his disciple Sabas. Some have taken issue with the text for its formulaic aspects and supposed chronological difficulties, but, by the standards of our period, it is a credible contemporary witness.[64] The titular Makarios, whom Theodore the Stoudite exalted as one of the most unwavering iconophiles of the time, was exiled by Leo V and subsequently recalled by Michael II. In the latter's reign, Makarios founded a monastery on the Propontis because the Pelekete had appointed a new abbot in his absence, but it was not long before he was imprisoned once more, this time under the regime of Theophilos. It was in prison that Makarios encountered

64 Ševčenko had doubts regarding the style and authenticity of the text, but the latter is beyond reproach in my view. Ševčenko, "The Hagiography," p. 117. The chronological difficulty noted by Hamilton, who observed that Makarios should have died in Michael II's reign because Theodore the Stoudite's *Ep.* 501 refers to a certain Sergios as the new abbot of the Pelekete *c.*823, is not admissible, since Makarios had been replaced as abbot upon being exiled. Theodore's letter makes quite clear that Makarios is still alive since the choice of the new abbot depends upon his approval. Note also that Sabas, the author of the *vita*, succeeded Makarios not as abbot of the Pelekete, but as the abbot of Makarios' foundation on the Propontis. See Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton, eds., *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450* (Manchester, 1998), p. 62, n. 1; Theodore the Stoudite, *Epistulae*, *Ep.* 501, vol. 2, pp. 741–742; Cyril Mango, Ihor Ševčenko, "Some Churches and Monasteries on the Southern Shore of the Sea of Marmara," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 27 (1973), pp. 245–246.

Paulicians awaiting execution and attempted to convert them, succeeding in one case:

> There were Paulicians, that is, Manichaeans, held in the prison under sentence of death, who begged the saint to pray for them at their death, but he said, 'There is no fellowship as this between light and darkness. That is why you are receiving the fitting end of your impiety. Not merely are you undergoing punishment in this life, but you will receive unending correction hereafter.' So one of the condemned said that he would receive the pledge of salvation in place of food, and Macarius himself baptised him. So though all came to a fatal end, this man alone was saved and fulfilled the works of promise, laying aside the filth of heresy and putting on the shining doctrines of piety.[65]

Most obviously, this extract shows that the death penalty decreed under earlier emperors was still upheld during Theophilos' reign. The pertinent question, albeit one which is not straightforward to answer, is how consistent and widespread this punishment was. It at least seems that initiatives against the Paulicians had broad support since, like his fellow iconophile Theophilos of Ephesos, Makarios finds the death penalty fitting, although given the conventions of hagiography, the sentiment may properly belong to the *Vita*'s author Sabas.[66] As we have seen throughout, irrespective of who held the ascendancy in the iconomachy, iconodule and iconoclasts largely agreed on the persecution of Paulicians. Although this is the only source attesting persecution during Theophilos' reign, evidence from the *Treatise*, which we shall shortly examine, tends to suggest the practice was somewhat prevalent. Besides this, several other aspects of the passage merit attention. By baptising the Paulician he converted, Makarios acts according to contemporary practices of readmission into the church, so we cannot necessarily take this as a corroboration of the *Treatise*'s claim that Paulicians did not undertake the ritual.[67] The steadfastness of the remaining Paulicians on the brink of execution initially appears

65 Sabas, "S. Macarii monasterii Pelecetes hegumeni acta graeca," 14, in *Analecta Bollandiana* 16, ed. Joseph van den Gheyn (1897), p. 159. See also Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton, eds., *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450* (Manchester, 1998), p. 62.

66 Alexander, "Religious Persecution," p. 256.

67 *Manichaean Formula*, in *Texte zum Manichäismus*, ed. Alfred Adam (Berlin, 1954), p. 94, l. 10–16; *Treatise*, 16, ed. and trans. Charles Astruc, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), p. 89. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 95.

eye-catching, but since conversion episodes like these are a common hagiographical trope, it is unlikely that this reveals anything about Paulician attitudes in the face of death.

A number of the interpretive lacuna described above are thankfully filled by the *Treatise*, which originally dates to Theophilos' reign, although it may have been revised afterward. As noted previously, it seems not to have been an officially disseminated text, thereby suggesting that a more sophisticated knowledge of the heresy did not arise from developments in the institutional church. This is rather surprising given the traditional iconoclast predilection for imposing authority and uniformity and tentatively suggests that, as in the case of his father Michael before him, Theophilos did not move against the Paulicians on his own initiative; punishment seems to have been the prerogative of local authorities with little or no coordination from the centre. As for its contents, the *Treatise* shows that earlier portrayals of Paulicians were coming under attack, albeit a qualified one. It retains their identification as Manichaeans, but places rather less significance on this, pinpointing Paul and John, the sons of Kallinike, as their original inspiration. Even while maintaining this, however, it notes that the Paulicians anathematise all of the above, together with Mani. As a result, it follows that Paulicians were probably originally interrogated using Manichaean abjuration formulae, which were quickly found insufficient for the task.[68] The main reason that the *Treatise* is a more nuanced witness than its predecessors is that it is the first Byzantine source to betray knowledge of the *Didaskalie* and *Letters of Sergios*. Through its dependence on these sources, the *Treatise* builds up a reasonable knowledge of Paulician conceptions of their history, but this does not seem to have extended to a similar knowledge of their belief. Its primary concern throughout is to determine how they differed from the established orthodoxy and in doing so it describes the circumlocutions that Paulicians used to feign conformity and the measures that orthodox interlocutors used to unmask these.[69] This gives the undeniable impression that they had become skilled at concealing their beliefs and that the ecclesiastical authorities had in turn formulated more sophisticated interrogation tactics. This implies that some Paulicians had gone underground since the persecutions of the 810s, thereby problematising the means of identifying them, but it also suggests that they were sought throughout the period, with the possible exception of Michael II's reign. Under his son too, there is little indication of the initiative and institutional support that

68 For the standard abjuration formula in earlier centuries, see *Manichaean Formula*, pp. 93–97.

69 *Treatise*, 7–17, pp. 84–89. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 93–95.

characterised the actions of Michael I or Leo V. Whatever the truth, Roman conceptions of Paulicians had evolved notably in the decades since the first persecutions, yet the Manichaean label still proved more tenacious than its accuracy warranted.

Thus far, then, it seems that Theophilos' reign posed notable difficulties for the Paulicians. This may be true, but there are also some contrasting indications which suggest a more subtle religio-political landscape. The most obvious of these is Karbeas' position as *protomandator* for Theodotos Melissenos, general of the Anatolikon, at the beginning of the regency headed by Theodora, Theophilos' widow. This senior rank, which is rarely attested, involves fulfilling special missions on the superior officer's behalf.[70] It is an important position, albeit one of the lowest in the general's immediate staff. For a Paulician to have risen to such a position during Theophilos' reign shows that Roman institutions cannot have been closed to them, at least in the provinces. The point cannot be pushed too far. Since we do not know how long Theodotos or Karbeas were in office, it may be that their rise only occurred after the turbulence that characterised the Anatolikon after the sack of its capital Amorion in 838.[71] Karbeas aside, we have little indication of Paulicians in Byzantine service at that time, besides one witness we shall soon discuss. What we do have is reliable reference to other supposedly dualist warriors among Theophilos' army and in his retinue: namely, Khurramiyya from the mountains of modern Iran and Azerbaijan. The origins of this people and their activity in Roman lands warrant a digression here, not only because as a militant and heterodox minority they enrich our understanding of the Paulicians, but also because the military context of which they were a part allows us to debunk the theory of a major Paulician presence in the east before Karbeas.

Perhaps even more so than the Paulicians, the Khurramiyya are a phenomenon of greater complexity than our extant sources portray. The interpretive

70 See Friedhelm Winkelmann, *Byzantinische Rang und Ämterstruktur im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1985), pp. 120, n. 5; 128, n. 1. The office of Mandator is rather better attested. See Alexander P. Kazhdan, "Mandator," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan, vol. 2 (New York/Oxford, 1991), p. 1281. For a near contemporary description of how a *protomandator* related to other ranks in the Anatolikon thema, see Philotheos' *Kletorologion*, a work of Leo VI's reign which is now only preserved within Constantine VII's compilation *De ceremoniis*. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *The Book of Ceremonies. Constantine Porphyrogennetos*, 2:52, ed. and trans. Anne Moffatt, Maxeme Tall, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Canberra, 2012), p. 716.

71 Significantly, the capital of the thema was moved to Polybotus afterward. See Klaus Belke, Norbert Mersich, *Tabula imperii Byzantini. Bd. 7, Phrygien und Pisidien* (Vienna, 1990), p. 92.

difficulties have not always translated into modern scholarship, where the movement is often attributed an undue degree of uniformity.[72] In the sources, the beliefs of the Khurramiyya are most commonly linked to Mazdakism, a radical Zoroastrian reform movement which advocated social equality through communal sharing of land, wealth, and possibly women. Whether this is an accurate rendering of the teaching of Mazdak himself remains unclear, but the ideas caused much upheaval in the Sasanian Empire during the reigns of Kavād I (488–496, 498–531), who may have used the movement as a means to check the power of the nobility, before it was ruthlessly suppressed under another great reforming *shāhanshāh*, his son Khusro I Anūshirwān (531–579).[73] Many modern writers have adopted the connection between Mazdakites and Khurramiyya, but this seems to be a simplification which takes Islamic heresiographers at their word.[74] There are doubts as to both the doctrine of the Khurramites and the homogeneity of the movement. They first appear on the historical scene during the late 8th century and can most profitably be interpreted as a succession of localised rebellions against the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate, largely in mountainous regions on the periphery of caliphal territory, often founded upon an alliance between local Iranian elites and the weakly Islamicised lower classes.[75]

In our era there were three Khurramite uprisings of note. The first of these broke out in Ādharbāyjān, in the north-west of modern Iran, and is best known for the successful resistance of Bābak al-Khurramī (*c*.816–838) against a series of ʿAbbāsid generals before his eventual defeat, capture, and execution.[76] The second took place in Jibāl province, which centred on the Zagros Mountains

72 The eclectic nature of the movement is best expressed by Wilferd Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (Albany, 1988), pp. 1–12. Also useful is Biancamaria Scarcia Amoretti, "Sects and Heresies," in *The Cambridge History of Iran IV: the Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. Richard N. Frye (Cambridge, 1975), p. 496.

73 For Mazdak and Mazdakism, see Khodadad Rezakhani, "Mazdakism, Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism: In Search of Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Late Antique Iran," *Iranian Studies* 48:1 (2015), pp. 55–70; Patricia Crone, "Kavād's Heresy and Mazdak's Revolt," *Iran* 29 (1991), pp. 21–42.

74 Madelung, *Religious Trends*, pp. 1–2.

75 Patricia Crone's recent study sees the Khurramite and Mazdakite belief systems as manifestations of a substratum of beliefs common to the Iranian world. This approach pays insufficient attention to contemporary context, in my view. See Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge, 2012).

76 See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-al-mulūk. The history of al-Ṭabarī*, 40 vols, vols 32, 33, trans. Clifford E. Bosworth (Albany, 1987–1991), *in passim*; Gholam H. Sadighi, *Les mouvements religieux iraniens an IIe et au IIIe siècles de l'hégire* (Paris, 1938), pp. 229–276; Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, pp. 46–76.

and regions east of this range. This revolt, which is not well documented, was quickly suppressed in 833.[77] The final revolt is associated with Māzīyār (825/26–839), the ruler of Ṭabaristān, who aimed to break the power of his Islamicised nobility.[78] The character of these revolts was rather heterogeneous: Bābak's rebellion seems an opportunistic affair which capitalised on the civil war of Hārūn's sons and, more specifically, the caliphate's inability to deploy an experienced and well-equipped force to dislodge him from his mountain fortress of al-Badhdh. This situation only changed with the arrival of the methodical and determined general Ḥaydar b. Kāwūs, otherwise known as al-Afshīn, the hereditary prince of Ošrūsana (a land on the upper Syr Darya near the easternmost limit of caliphal territory), whom we shall soon meet again. By contrast, in the case of Māzīyār, a bloodthirsty and brutal figure who eventually alienated most of those who encountered him, his self-interest and rivalries seem the predominant motive for his actions. In all of the above cases, the ideological concerns of the rank and file combatants are not known to us, but they were most probably entwined with the wave of religious dissent that had swept the caliphate since the career of Abū Muslim al-Khurāsāni, the original rallying figure of the 'Abbāsid Revolution who inspired many in his wake before and after the newly installed caliph al-Manṣūr (754–775) made a martyr of him. A variety of prophetic and messianic figures raised the flag of rebellion after Abū Muslim's death, albeit not always necessarily in his name, notably in Khurāsān, but also in other areas with strong Iranian influences.[79] Although Iranian and Zoroastrian characteristics are often stressed in the case of the Khurramiyya and others, a syncretistic perspective might be more appropriate. The Khurramiyya, for instance, are frequently conflated with other movements in Islamic sources, such as al-Muḥammirah, who derived their name from their red clothing, as well as Shi'ite groups.[80]

77 al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 33, pp. 2–4; Mohamed Rekaya, "Mise au point sur Théophobe et l'alliance de Bâbek avec Théophile (833/34 – 839/40)," *Byzantion* 44 (1974), pp. 43–45.

78 al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 33, pp. 135–172; 179–180; Sadighi, *Les mouvements religieux*, pp. 60–63; Amoretti, "Sects and Heresies," p. 503; Mohamed Rekaya, "Māzyār: résistance ou integration d'une province iranienne au monde musulman au milieu du IXe siècle ap. J.C.," *Studia Iranica* 2 (1973), pp. 143–192.

79 For Abū Muslim and contemporary revolts, see Crone, *The Nativist Prophets*, pp. 37–39; 42–43; 129–130.

80 For al-Muḥammirah, see al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 30, trans. Clifford E. Bosworth (Albany, 1989), p. 163; Sadighi, *Les mouvements*, p. 108. For their equation with the Khurramiyya, see al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 33, p. 95. For Shi'a influence, see Madelung, *Religious Trends*, pp. 7–8.

To cut a long story short, neither the ideological position nor the unity of the Khurramiyya can be taken for granted. The Mazdakite label which is conventionally applied to them arises from the movement's Iranian and social revolutionary character, but their ascendancy is much better explained by the specific socio-religious context of this period than a debt to the long-vanished Mazdakites. The Khurramiyya could have derived the social aspects of their belief, which are not well attested in any case, independently of Mazdakism. As a result, it is unclear whether we should term them dualists, or whether contemporary Romans understood them in this way. Byzantine sources, in fact, tell us precious little about their beliefs.[81] Nonetheless, despite being distinct in their ethnicity, religion, and culture, the Khurramiyya rose to occupy a role of some esteem in Theophilos' regime. Especially prominent was the Khurramite leader Theophobos, who had a Byzantine education and may have been appointed *caesar* and heir presumptive to the then childless emperor.[82] The origins of Theophobos and his followers are disputed, with Mohamed Rekaya tracing them to the Khurramiyya of the Jibāl and Signes Codoñer identifying them with the partisans of Bābak.[83] Given Ādharbāyjān's proximity to the empire, the latter interpretation seems more probable, but the matter cannot be settled definitively. What is clear is that Theophilos considered them a valuable military asset for much of his reign. Their support for the emperor proved a valuable counterbalance amid aristocratic dissatisfaction with his rule, although the favour in which they – and Theophobos in particular – were held exacerbated the rivalries of Theophilos' court.[84] As for their military exploits, it is worthwhile to trace these, together with the contours of Theophilos' campaigns, in some detail here, for these undermine the possibility of Paulician raids against the empire prior to Karbeas' defection.

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81 One exception regards the occultation of Theophobos. See Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 3:7, p. 42. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 55–56; Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 3:38, pp. 196–197.

82 Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos*, pp. 153–172. For Theophobos' possible role as *caesar*, see Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos*, pp. 167–168.

83 See Rekaya, "Mise au point," pp. 51–55; Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos,* pp. 146–147. For the flight of Khurramiyya to the empire from Jibāl, which al-Ṭabarī links to Theophilos' regiment, see al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 33, pp. 2–4; 95. Michael the Syrian does not link the Jibāl rebellion with a flight to Byzantine territory. See Michael the Syrian, *The Syriac Chronicle*, 12:18, p. 564; For the flight of Bābak's followers, see Michael the Syrian, *The Syriac Chronicle*, 12:19, p. 566. The Continuator posits that Bābak submitted to Theophilos, but this is evidently garbled. See Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 3:21, pp. 162–163.

84 Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos*, pp. 132–136.

The invasion of Thomas the Slav aside, Michael II's reign was an uneventful one for the empire on the eastern frontier, for it was only after the accession of his son that the caliphate was stable enough to resume campaigning, with the raid of al-Ma'mūn in 830 being the first of its kind for decades. Unlike many of his predecessors, Theophilos was in a position to counterattack via raids in Kilikia and in subsequent years would show himself to be the most active Byzantine campaigner in the east since the days of Constantine V almost a century beforehand. His support for Bābak al-Khurramī's rebels remains conjectural, but it seems that he had Khurramiyya in his service by, or shortly after, the accession of the new caliph al-Mu'taṣim in 833.[85] It is in this vein that in 834, or perhaps 836, a Khurramite force undertook raids toward Basean, to the east of Theodosiopolis, at times displaying a propensity for heavy-handed violence that would prove something of a hallmark, before suffering a serious defeat at the hands of Isḥāq b. Ismā'īl, Emir of Tiflis.[86] As Signes Codoñer notes, this campaign was probably independent of Theophilos' attack on Theodosiopolis in 835, thereby suggesting that they were not yet integrated into the emperor's army.[87] They were, however, present during Theophilos' ambitious attack on Sozopetra, Arsamosata, and Melitene in 837 and had integrated themselves into the heart of his armies when al-Mu'taṣim sought retribution in the following year.[88] While al-Mu'taṣim himself led the main force through the Kilikian Gates, a second army entered Byzantine territory through the pass at Melitene under the command of al-Afshīn, the same general who had finally ended Bābak's rebellion in the previous year. Subordinate to him was 'Amr al-Aqṭa', the Emir of Melitene whose steady rise to prominence would see him ally with the Paulicians a decade later.

Threatened on two fronts, Theophilos resolved to meet al-Afshīn first, but, despite gaining the upper hand at the crucial battle of Anzes in 838, the decisive intervention of mounted Turkish archers turned the tide in the Prince of Ošrūsana's favour. Theophilos became isolated from the main force, almost losing his life in the process, and although the Khurramiyya distinguished themselves during the battle, the aftermath would prove disastrous for their prospects with the emperor.[89] Despite his escape, rumours of Theophilos' death spread and claimants for the throne soon materialised. One such

85 Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos,* pp. 250; 267–268; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 33, pp. 93–94.
86 Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos,* pp. 245–259; 268.
87 Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos,* pp. 246–262.
88 Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos,* pp. 263; 268.
89 Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos*, pp. 279–312.

claimant was Theophobos, who despite not being present at Anzes was reportedly proclaimed emperor by the Khurramiyya, who had fled to Sinope after the battle. The murky realities of court politics make it difficult to judge if this is true or not. Signes Codoñer's hypothesis that the Khurramiyya were the victim of political conspiracy is an attractive one, since they owed their privileged position to Theophilos and remained with him during the darkest hours at Anzes.[90] In any event, both Theophobos and the Khurramiyya fell from grace after this episode. Theophobos was executed, either shortly afterward or on Theophilos' death in 842, whereas the Khurramiyya were disbanded and integrated into the thematic armies.[91] As for the aftermath of Anzes, al-Afshīn's victory left Amorion, the largest city in Asia Minor at the time, easy prey to al-Mu'taṣim's main force, which included Armenian contingents headed by the Prince of Princes Bagarat II Bagratuni (830–852) and the Arcruni family.[92] The city was sacked, although the difficulties of the withdrawal, such as the lack of water and provisions, as well as the constant threat of Byzantine harassment, left the caliph with little choice but to execute his prisoners, thereby depriving his troops of their rewards and taking much of the shine off his victory. A campaign of such ambition would not be launched through Asia Minor for the rest of our period and, aside for some cursory raids, campaigning seems to have ceased in the final years of al-Mu'taṣim and Theophilos, both of whom died comparatively young in January 842.

There are two main points to take away from the above. Firstly, although it is a moot point whether contemporary Byzantines understood the Khurramiyya to be dualists or not, there are no indications that their ethnicity or heterodoxy proved to be points of contention with Theophilos or his administration, even if these factors may well have exacerbated the factional intrigues of his court. The primary motivating factor throughout the emperor's dealings with them is the old politico-military maxim: an enemy of an enemy is a friend. Heterodoxy was not an insurmountable issue to mutual understanding in the period, as is evident from the readiness of Byzantines to come to accommodation with the Paulicians once they had ceased to be a threat to the empire. This implies that many of the developments we have seen so far, in terms of both accommodation and conflict between Romans and Paulicians, were not necessary developments, but unpredictable outcomes occasioned by the vagaries of historical

90 Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos*, pp. 176–180.

91 Signes Codoñer, *Emperor Theophilos*, p. 180.

92 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 3:13, pp. 46–47. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 62–63; Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 3:31, pp. 82–83.

circumstance. The Khurramiyya provide a valuable point of comparison here, since their integration into the social fabric of Romanía seems to have been reasonably swift; as well as being conscripted within the army and his advisory circle, Theophilos provided them with Roman brides, which implies that they converted, perhaps perfunctorily, to Christianity.[93] They were a force that he could harness for his own ends and when they posed a threat of usurpation, he swiftly had them disbanded and scattered among his other troops. Perhaps because they were near to the epicentre of power, the imperial administration kept a close watch on them and when it lost the initiative, as in the case of the aborted rebellion, it quickly regained control of affairs. On the other hand, the empire seems to have never got to grips with the Paulicians. They were not as easy to distinguish as Khurramiyya and, as proselytising Christians, they had the greatest capacity to threaten orthodox religion by attracting converts from it. The enemy within provoked the most anxiety.

Secondly, throughout the above account we saw an ever-changing military dynamic across the region that linked theatres of operations from Asia Minor in the west to Ṭabaristān and the Jibāl in the east. Localised conflicts, such as that of the Khurramite Bābak, could become regional affairs when outside actors sought to turn the situation to their advantage. Yet nowhere do our Arabic, Greek, or Armenian sources mention Paulicians in connection with the military events of the 830s. It is this which makes the thesis of an early alliance with Melitene so unconvincing. We have already seen that Peter of Sicily's claim that a Paulician-Muslim alliance raided Asia Minor as early as the 810s does not stand up to scrutiny, since this decade actually marked a low point of Islamic intervention in the peninsula. It is similarly evident that conditions were not yet ripe in the 830s. Not only do we find no mention of Paulicians in the sources, but the key figure of 'Amr al-Aqṭa', who served under al-Afshīn in the Amorion campaign, was not yet in a position to exert his authority. The face-off between empire and caliphate was certainly in one of its most acute phases in the 830s, with Theophilos, al-Ma'mūn, and al-Mu'taṣim all campaigning across the frontier. It was only in the aftermath of al-Mu'taṣim's ambitious offensive, when military operations were less lofty in their aims and scale and the caliphal administration ceded the initiative to local commanders, that the area became conducive to the raiding strategies favoured by 'Amr and his new Paulician allies.

93 Anthony Kaldellis, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA/London, 2019), pp. 128–130; Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 3:21, pp. 162–163; Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 3:3, p. 38. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. 52.

A final source sheds light on Paulician military activity in the reign of Theophilos and, although it is an intriguing one, it is neither contemporary nor straightforward. Version *Γ* of the *42 Martyrs of Amorion* is one of many accounts associated with the titular martyrs, a group of prisoners who were spared execution during the Amorion campaign and instead relocated to Sāmarrā where, despite attempts at ransom by the Byzantine authorities, they were put to death under al-Mu'taṣim's successor al-Wāthiq in 845.[94] The surviving accounts of this passion differ markedly in their form and, while some of them have traditionally been considered contemporary with events, Alexander Kazhdan has convincingly argued that the entire tradition originated at the turn of the 10th century and, in my view, version *Γ* is probably one of the later variants.[95] Some authorities have dated the text considerably earlier, since it is attributed to a certain Michael, monk and synkellos, whom some commentators have identified with the famous Michael the Synkellos (*c.*761–846).[96] This attribution is unlikely because Michael died only a year after the martyrs.[97]

Version *Γ* centres upon the imperial official Kallistos, whose encounter with Paulicians has no analogue in other variants of the text. While the other iterations are more conventional passion narratives, our text has a hagiographical bent, developing the family life and career of Kallistos, an iconodule who suffered persecution under Theophilos, but was nevertheless appointed Duke of Koloneia by the latter, who reluctantly recognized Kallistos' merits. Whether Kallistos is a genuine historical figure is up for debate, but, as the passion has it, he is a rather reluctant man of the world who is forced to give up his monastic habit and return to imperial service. In fact, the odd comparisons between martial and spiritual combat which pervade the text suggest we almost certainly have before us a monastic product.[98] It is after being put in command of

94 Michael, Monk and Synkellos, "De XLII martyribus Amoriensibus narrationes et carmina sacra," in *Zapiski Imperatorskoĭ akademīi nauk po Istoriko-filologicheskomu otdĭelenīiu. Mémoires de l'Académie impériale des sciences de St.-Pétersbourg. Classe historico-philologique. VIIIe série* 7:2, eds. Vasily G. Vasil'evsky, Petr V. Nikitin (1905), pp. 22–36. For the other variants (*A-Θ*), see pp. 1–90. For the martyrs, see Athina Kolia-Dermitzaki, "The Execution of the Forty-Two Martyrs of Amorion: Proposing an Interpretation," *Al-Masāq* 14:2 (2002), pp. 141–162.

95 Alexander P. Kazhdan, "Hagiographical Notes 13–16," *Byzantion* 56 (1986), pp. 151–153.

96 Sofia Kotzabassi, "Τὸ μαρτύριο τῶν μβ' μαρτύρων τοῦ Ἀμορίου. Ἁγιολογικὰ καὶ ὑμνολογικὰ κείμενα," *Επιστημονική επετηρίς φιλοσοφικής Σχολής του Αριστοτελειου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης* 2 (1992), pp. 120–124; Kolia-Dermitzaki, "The Execution," p. 144.

97 See Mary B. Cunningham, ed., *The Life of Michael the Synkellos* (Belfast, 1991), p. 37.

98 A connection could be hazarded with the Pelekete, the only monastery mentioned in the work, but since the monastery is well attested elsewhere, notably in the influential *Vita Stephani Iunioris*, this may be too conjectural. For the latter, see Stephen the

an Ethiopian contingent in the army that Kallistos renounces worldly affairs, only to be recalled and given the command at Koloneia. Here he discovers "Manichaeans" among his soldiers and attempts to convert them:

> After finding some men of rank who were sick with the heresy of the Manichaeans, at first he admonished, encouraged, and advised them to desist from their foul religion, revealing before their eyes the fearful consequences of the impartial judgement of God, the perpetual and eternal fire of retribution that he prepared for the devil and his demons and all those who deny that [Christ] was truly born of the virgin through the incarnation of the Holy Spirit for the salvation and restoration of the race of men, but instead was born only in illusion. But as Kallistos saw that they remained in their error, uncorrected and altogether sinful, he made it known that they were cast aside from his devotion. Accordingly, those most evil of evil men, the namesakes of madness, treated their benefactor in this manner (the madness of it!): they plotted among themselves to substitute that worthy and capable leader of men, the leader and commander of their lands, appointed by God, with his exact opposite. After twining their wretched souls together in conspiracy against the just man, they gave birth to devious suffering, a betrayal of Judas' kind. And so in an assembly convened against their enemies, they gave him over to their fellow Manichaeans, who had abandoned the customs and lands of the Christians through their own impiety and made treaties with the bloodthirsty peoples of Agar, remaining forsaken from divine providence, as is worthy of their foul disposition. "And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God," as the apostle says, "God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done." The man of peace and mouthpiece of piety Kallistos, in accordance with what God ordained for him, was plotted against like his own Lord and betrayed to the apostates under the command of the thrice-wretched Karbeas. There he was at first sentenced to the punishment of imprisonment in iron fetters with his fellow companions and attendants, who were few in number. Bearing himself with good courage among them he said to God: "For the sake of your name, Lord, if I travel in the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evils, because you are with me."

Deacon, *La vie d'Étienne le Jeune par Étienne le diacre*, ed. and trans. Marie-France Auzépy (Aldershot, 1997).

> The leader of the Agarenes, learning of this, sent for him straight away and sent him captive to Syria, commanding him to be yoked together with the noble martyrs of Christ, Constantine, Theophilos, and Basoes. These holy men had been toiling in the misery of prison for six years, contending with fetters, hunger, and the ground for a bed after the capture of Amorion, those who had previously dined sumptuously in fine health, with their troops on guard.[99]

Once grouped together, Kallistos and the other martyrs are marched off and finally executed. Leaving aside the particulars of the above account for just a moment, the passage gives clear reasons why this text should be dated among the later variants about the 42 Martyrs. The martyrs themselves are peripheral to the main narrative, appearing at its culmination without any prior reference or foreshadowing. Since our text is a hagiography rather than a passion, it differs from the main tradition in both its genre and its focus, thereby suggesting an attempt to exploit the popularity of the martyrs' story in order to exalt the person of Kallistos. Thus, it seems probable that it is one of the later texts of the tradition.

As for the account itself, several aspects deserve further consideration. First a chronological difficulty: although our other sources state that Karbeas only aligned himself with the caliphate after the persecutions of Theodora's regency, this text never refers to the death of her husband Theophilos. This should not trouble us too greatly, however.[100] Two of the text's strongest emphases are its iconophile perspective and its negative portrayal of Theophilos, so it seems probable that for stylistic reasons the source avoids diluting its message by focusing on Theophilos alone. This is likely because the source's chronology is otherwise reliable, despite its late date. Since the martyrs had already been confined for six years when Kallistos joined them, it follows that he did so in 844/45, which fits with the date of Karbeas' defection in 843/44. As a result, the narrative places Kallistos's confrontation with the Paulicians soon after the latter had broken with the empire and become an independent power. Taking this context into account, a literal reading suggests that Kallistos' religious zeal rather outstripped his common sense, but this is probably a consequence of the stylised nature of the narrative. The Paulicians are little more than a plot device to place Kallistos among the other martyrs, which complicates our interpretation somewhat. By contemporary norms, we would expect Kallistos to impose a stiffer punishment than releasing them from his service,

99 Michael, Monk and Synkellos, "De XLII martyribus Amoriensibus," p. 29.

100 See also Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 126–127.

but, again, this penalty might be impelled by narrative necessity, since in this scenario the Paulicians still had sufficient freedom to betray him. Nevertheless, evidence elsewhere suggests that there was some disparity between the theory and practice of punishment, so this penalty should not be discounted entirely.

A final aspect of the source is undeniably the most interesting: its characterisation of a Paulician fifth column among Kallistos' troops at Koloneia. Besides references to Karbeas, explicit acknowledgement that Paulician and Roman identities were contingent and could overlap are absent from our sources. Here, however, we have a source that claims that Paulicians remained in imperial forces even after many of their confession had forsaken the empire and aligned themselves against it, thereby also positing internal tensions within Paulician – and indeed Roman – identity. Since the source notes that these Paulicians were "men of rank," it is evident that they had risen high in the military hierarchy and their power was evidently great enough to successfully seize and betray their master. Critically, since Kallistos discovered them among his troops, Paulician identity was not self-evident at this time, but could be concealed, as the *Treatise* also suggests. It is uncomfortable that these emphases arise in a late and somewhat stylised source, but the underlying trajectory here is eminently believable during Theophilos' reign, where the Paulicians are invisible during the most notable regional conflicts, but were well placed to assert themselves in just a few years' time. If so, then they, like the Khurramiyya, may have profited from the military exploits of the 830s, albeit more indirectly, suggesting that Karbeas was perhaps not such an exceptional figure. Scattered indications elsewhere corroborate this portrayal and suggest that, while the Paulicians were not yet a power on the eastern frontier, their influence was surreptitiously increasing in the area.

The most prominent indicator of this is the *Treatise*, which shows no knowledge of Karbeas or his rebellion, but still posits a Paulician presence on the empire's eastern periphery. Some caution is necessary here, since much of this evidence stems from glosses on the *Didaskalie* or *Letters of Sergios* by a Byzantine source, but these glosses are significant in positing continuity between Karbeas' era and that which came before. The best example lies in the geography of the Paulician churches founded by Sergios:

> … they call the Church of the Laodicaeans the Argaoutes and they call the Church of the Ephesians those in Mopsuestia. They call the Church of the Kolossians the Kynochorites. These three churches, they say, Sergios-Tychikos taught.[101]

101 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 163, pp. 60–61. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 88.

If we accept that the *Treatise* was written during Theophilos' reign, it is strange to find reference to the Argaoutes, who are surely the inhabitants of the same Argaous that 'Amr al-Aqṭa' ceded to Karbeas during Theodora's regency. The *History* claims a Paulician presence at Argaous as early as the 810s, when bands of Sergios' followers known as the *Astatoi* and *Kynochoritae* fled here after assassinating the provincial officials in charge of persecution. As we saw in Chapter 1, the *History* is at its most unreliable and garbled here because it seeks to explain the transition from the religious face of the Paulicians to the militaristic one; that is, the period straddling Sergios and Karbeas. As a result of the evidence adduced there, a date as early as the 810s cannot be substantiated for a significant Paulician presence near Melitene, yet it seems clear that some Paulicians were in the area by Theophilos' reign. The possibility of a Paulician church at Mopsuestia is even more mystifying because it is wholly unattested elsewhere and the city remained in Muslim hands throughout our period. As one of the major settlements in the Emirate of Tarsus, it would seem at first glance to be a southern counterpart to Argaous or Tephrikē, but since it is distant from the Kilikian Gates it lacks the strategic location of these sites. In view of the collaboration between the emirates of Melitene and Tarsus during the careers of 'Amr al-Aqṭa' and 'Alī b. Yaḥyā al-Armanī, the Tarsite emir for much of our period, the connection is an attractive one, but since the association is never made by other sources, their presence must have been minor at best.[102] Whatever the truth of these two examples, the conclusion still seems clear that the Paulicians had gravitated to Islamic territories prior to Karbeas' defection. As we saw in the previous chapter, Constantine V's relocations from Melitene and Theodosiopolis cannot be safely associated with them, but the fact that Theophanes invoked their name in connection with these places when he wrote (*c.*813) shows that their presence in lands to the east of the empire was already noted at that time. The difficulty lies in articulating the extent of continuity with Karbeas' era. Perhaps the best way out of the impasse is to posit a more indirect connection than the *History*. As a result of the source's efforts to demonise the Paulician *didaskaloi*, it is convenient for it to position Sergios

102 For much of our period, 'Alī seems to have held the greater prominence, since he led most of the summer expeditions during the 850s. When Ja'far b. Dīnār led the summer expedition in 863, 'Amr had to request permission for his own raid. See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 35, trans. George Saliba (Albany, 1985), pp. 9–10. Al-Ṭabarī also notes that 'Amr asked 'Alī for a winter expedition in 856/57. See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 34, trans. Joel L. Kraemer (Albany, 1989), p. 147. On 'Alī, see also Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, "'Alī ibn Yaḥyā al-Armanī and the "Armenian Connection" between Bosporus, Tigris and Nile in the Mid-9th Century CE," in *Armenia & Byzantium Without Borders*, eds. Emilio Bonfiglio, Claudia Rapp (Vienna, forthcoming).

as the precursor of Karbeas, Chrysocheir, and their marauding contingents. Yet Sergios' own letters reveal that he disavowed violence against the Romans, whereas the *Didaskalie*, which he commissioned, has a hostile and undeveloped portrayal of Muslims that suggests that an Islamic alliance was far from his thoughts. The *History* resolves these tensions by having Sergios rejoin his followers in Argaous after they set up station there, but I prefer an alternative solution, which would see a low-level Paulician presence in the area for much of our period that only became significant after Karbeas' flight.

In summary, the evidence for Paulicians in Theophilos' reign is contradictory and difficult to interpret. On the one hand, they were still subject to punishment for their beliefs, but there are indications that this was not systematically enforced throughout the reign. While evidence for them as an armed force is limited, whether operating independently or subordinated to other powers, the military context of the period seems conducive to the martial talents for which they would subsequently be famed. Furthermore, even if Karbeas' defection from the empire marks a new era, some continuity may lay behind both his presence in the Roman army and the Paulician presence along the Anti-Taurus. When all of the above is taken into account, the most convincing way to reconcile the contradictions is to posit that in a period where Byzantine-Islamic warfare was at its fiercest, internal differentiations within empire and caliphate receded in significance in comparison with external threats. In short, Byzantines and perhaps also Muslims were less concerned with identifying Paulicians, with the result that they could more easily position themselves within other identity categories.

In part, this process may have been driven by developments among the Paulicians themselves. Earlier Roman persecution had led them to practice their beliefs underground, thereby making them less distinct from other provincial Roman identities. During the fraught context of the 830s this seems to have worked to their advantage, aiding their infiltration of the army, which allowed them to gain status and resources while shielding themselves from harm. We saw in the previous chapter that subsistence patterns are often adopted tactically and in this period it seems to have been most profitable for more martial Paulicians to subsume themselves within the armies of the great powers in an era where a heightened military presence made low-level brigandage more risky. This process might have been tolerated or encouraged by Byzantine officials as a matter of expediency. If the above is accepted, then some tentative propositions can be made about persecution in Theophilos' reign. It seems unlikely that it was ever routinely enforced as a matter of policy and may have been driven by the zeal of local authorities, especially in places or periods where the Islamic threat was minimal. Significant measures

were probably not taken in the eastern themata, such as the Anatolikon and Armeniakon, both because these suffered most from Islamic raids and because they had the greatest concentration of Paulicians. In times of warfare especially, the authorities presumably turned a blind eye to the presence of heretics in the army, or may have even conscripted them with the tacit understanding that their beliefs would not be subject to censure and, if so, their presence in imperial networks may have contributed to the growth of the movement. Much of this is admittedly conjectural, but dynamics of this kind best reconcile the comparative silence of our sources with the fact that the Paulicians would soon be able to defy the empire altogether.

Before examining Theodora's regency, a final event merits attention in Theophilos' reign: the death of the *didaskalos* Sergios-Tychikos in 6343 Anno Mundi (i.e. 834/35).[103] According to the always questionable witness of Peter of Sicily, while chopping trees into planks in the vicinity of Argaous, Sergios was set upon by one Tzanion, an inhabitant of the obscure locale Kastellon of Nikopolis, who seized the axe from his hands and struck him down.[104] Tzanion's affiliation and motives are not given, which makes it difficult to explain the supposed massacre of Baaniotes by Sergiotes after the deed. At any rate, the *History* tells us that thereafter the Paulicians at Argaous ceased to have a single *didaskalos* and were instead led by the *synekdemoi* of Sergios.[105] What became of Baanes and his followers is never stated. There is much to be suspicious of in all of this. Aside from the issues that are generic to the *History*, there are indications that the rivalry between the Sergiotes and Baaniotes has distorted the narrative. The difficulties are exacerbated by the total absence of the *didaskaloi*, the *synekdemoi*, and their ilk from any of our later sources. As a result, I would advocate some scepticism about most of these events, including the circumstances of Sergios' death. From this point onward, the testimony of our Paulician sources gives out entirely, so any potential development in their beliefs is impossible to trace. All we know of the later *synekdemoi* stems from Peter of Sicily, who tells us little except that they were resident at Argaous and

103 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 179–181, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 90–91.

104 Kastellon of Nikopolis was presumably a fortified centre near Nikopolis, a town located to the west of Koloneia. See Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 74–75; *Abjuration Formula* 1, ed. and trans. Jean Gouillard, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 194–195, l. 57. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 105.

105 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 182–183, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 91.

Tephrikē.[106] Considering the eventful history of the Paulicians along the Anti-Taurus, it seems highly unlikely that their religious worldview did not change, but we lack the ability to trace this. The age of the *didaskaloi* was at an end.

5 The Persecutions of Theodora

The death of Theophilos in January 842 did not occur at a propitious time for dynastic stability: his son Michael III was only two years old.[107] The day-to-day governance of the empire fell to Theophilos' widow Theodora and, in particular, the eunuch and logothete Theoktistos, who soon became the dominant figure of the regency. This partnership is best known nowadays for the Triumph of Orthodoxy in March 843, which instituted the devotion of icons once and for all, notwithstanding the occasional rumbling of iconoclast discontent later in the century. The iconoclast patriarch John the Grammarian was deposed, but the recently expired Theophilos escaped condemnation through his wife's entreaties.[108] Soon afterward, the new patriarch Methodios took action against an obscure heresy in Constantinople led by the *protoasekretes* Lizix or Zelix (the name is variously spelt).[109] Our surviving accounts of this affair are brief but similar, thereby suggesting mutual dependence.[110] Both Genesios and the Continuator tell us nothing about what the heresy entailed, but they do note the swift conversion of its adherents and their admittance to the orthodox communion.[111] Lizix and the Lizikians, his followers, have traditionally been equated with Paulicians, largely due to a fragment preserved in Niketas Choniates' *Treasury of the Orthodox Faith*, but Gouillard has instead suggested that Lizix was actually a high-ranking iconoclast, who may even have been

106 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 187–188, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 92.

107 Cyril Mango, "When Was Michael III Born?," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 21 (1967), pp. 235–258.

108 Brubaker, Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, pp. 447–452.

109 Lizix is the preferred name of Methodios and Gregory Asbestas. Zelix is given by Genesios and the Continuator, who specify his rank as *protoasekretes*, whereas Asbestas only places him among the *asekretes* with no further precisions given.

110 Jean Gouillard, "Deux figures mal connues du second iconoclasm," *Byzantion* 31:2 (1961), pp. 372–374.

111 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:12, pp. 230–231; Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:6, p. 60. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. 77.

touted as a future patriarch.[112] The fragment of Choniates ultimately derives from the now lost *Vita Methodi* by Gregory Asbestas, Archbishop of Syracuse, which significantly deems Lizix a Manichaean:

> One must know that, as Gregory, archbishop of Sicily (who composed the life of our father among the saints, Methodios, Patriarch of Constantinople), says, in the reign of Michael and Theodora his mother, there was a certain *asekretis*, whose name was Lizix, who believed in the doctrines of the Manichaeans. He considered veneration of the cross foolish and, naming our Lord and God Jesus Christ a creature, he said that his all-holy mother was not the Mother of God. What is more, he derided the awe-inspiring and divine mystery of communion. Many others followed him and hence the heresy of the so-called Lizikians was founded. The holy Methodios thereupon persuaded this man to convert to the orthodox faith and through him also persuaded the others. Having prepared a feast day to triumph over their heresy, he anointed them with holy myrrh and adorned them in baptismal white and, as they held their torches, he reconciled them with the orthodox.[113]

The doctrines which the source ascribes to these heretics line up well with the nearly contemporary *Treatise*, so at first the Paulician identification appears convincing, but a fourth source, which is not related to any of the above, undermines this. Specifically, a series of anti-iconoclast odes by the patriarch Methodios himself characterise the heretic he converted as one of the most notorious iconoclasts of the day, even being numbered among the patriarchs of the second iconomachy. Parts of the fifth ode, which is devoted specifically to Lizix, are worth noting here:

> The Spirit halts the verbose blasphemy of Lizix, his incessant babbling day after day against the divine form of Christ and the saints.
>
> Why, thrice-wretched man, do you hate the immaculate embodiment of the incarnation of Christ and all the saints? Or do the faithful venerate vacant idols?

112 Gouillard, "Deux figures," pp. 371–387. For Lizix as a Paulician, see Loos, "Le mouvement paulicien," p. 281, n. 111; Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 34; 179–180. Lemerle does not discuss Lizix.

113 Niketas Choniates, *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, *Patrologia Graeca* 140, col. 281–284.

> Since the instruments of impiety were about, they gathered a council of impious priests against the God on high, like the Jews Annas and Caiaphas before.
>
> On the day of judgement, wretch, there will be reproaches for your godless soul from the assembly of the fathers, whose flesh you stripped with blows beyond measure.
>
> All the churches call out, the churches which were robbed by you acclaim the holy icons in the form of the Lord and his saints.[114]

Besides being an opponent of the icons, Lizix appears also to have been an agitator of note who oppressed iconophiles and perhaps also contributed to the development of iconoclast doctrine, depending on how we interpret the obscurely phrased council. On this point at least, the ode fits well with the fragment of Asbestas, which intimates that his followers were as much a concern as he was. On the other hand, Lizix's heresy is conceived very differently by both sources. The traits described in Choniates' paraphrase of Asbestas are what we would expect of Paulicians at the time and cannot be easily reconciled with the iconoclast emphasis of Methodios.

The neatest way of resolving this conundrum would be to posit that Lizix was both an iconoclast and a Paulician, but this is not entirely convincing since, as we have seen, there is little evidence that the two movements intersected outside polemical strands of iconodule propaganda. It seems unlikely, for instance, that any Paulician sympathies on Lizix's part would effectively be given a slap on the wrist so close to a draconian crackdown on the heresy. All things considered, I am inclined to follow Gouillard in downplaying the Paulician link in favour of the iconoclast one, but, even so, unanswered questions remain. Lizix's penance for readmission is harsher than that of other iconoclasts, although far less severe than the violence to which Paulicians were subjected at the time. If iconoclasm was his only point of deviance, he must have been one of its most extreme exponents, thereby suggesting that he may have been among the most recalcitrant iconoclasts until his reconciliation, as Gouillard suggests.[115] Perhaps the point of significance was not his beliefs at all, but rather the occasion. Both Genesios and the Continuator place Lizix's reconciliation immediately after the restoration of icon worship and the former

114 Methodios, *Canones in adorationem crucis*, *Patrologia Graeca* 99, col. 1771D-1774C.

115 Gouillard, "Deux figures," pp. 384–387.

specifies that the event occurred in Hagia Sophia on a feast day.[116] The event may well have been staged as the conversion of the most militant members of the iconoclast faction. At any rate, it seems that Lizix's heresy was either difficult to characterise, or its substance became confused in the works of later writers. Asbestas' description is perhaps indebted to the subsequent notoriety of the Paulicians, but, given the difficulties, the precise nature of Lizix's deviance must remain an open question.[117]

Although little else is certain, the connection between the Lizix affair and the restoration of the icons seems beyond reproach. The latter event is also without doubt connected to the persecution of the Paulicians under Theodora, but the exact relationship is unclear because we lack the variety of testimony that contextualises Michael I's initiatives a generation before. Dating the persecution is not entirely straightforward. Our only detailed account, that of the Continuator, has the persecution follow a description of Khan Boris of Bulgaria's (852–889) dealings with the empire during the 850s and 860s, which he then causally links to the persecution.[118] This is obviously inadmissible. The only temporal marker that allows us to situate these events is the betrayal of Kallistos to Karbeas in variant *Γ* of the *42 Martyrs of Amorion*, which places Karbeas in Islamic territories prior to the martyrs' execution in 845, thereby suggesting that the persecution began in 843/44, that is, very shortly after the resumption of iconoclasm.[119] As we shall see in the following chapter, this date fits convincingly with contemporary events. It can also be reconciled with the Continuator's account since, if he integrated the material concerning Boris into an already existing account, the persecutions would immediately follow the iconophiles' triumph and the conversion of Lizix. The Continuator's account segues into Karbeas' flight and insurrection, which we shall leave aside here and discuss in the following chapter:

116 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:12, pp. 230–231; Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:6, p. 60. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. 77.

117 Gouillard, "Deux figures," pp. 377–379.

118 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4.13–15, pp. 230–235.

119 As the passage quoted earlier in the chapter shows, version *Γ* places the betrayal of Kallistos six years after the sack of Amorion. Despite this, it erroneously considers these events to have occurred during the reign of Theophilos. It seems to be for this reason that Grégoire thought that the persecution of the Paulicians preceded the restoration of icon veneration. See Henri Grégoire, "Communication sur les Pauliciens," *Atti del V Congreso Internazionale di Studi Bizantini*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1939), p. 177.

> Thus affairs in the west proceeded in a splendid way and were the common talk everywhere. The empress rejoiced in this, and as if desiring to set up a greater trophy, she made an attempt also on the Paulicians in the east, either to convert them to piety, as she wished, or else to do away with and wipe them out from mankind; and this brought many evils upon our land. For she sent certain men of rank with authority – those dispatched were called the son of Argyros, the son of Doux and Soudales – and they hung some Paulicians on the furca, others they gave over to the sword and yet others to the depths of the sea. The host thus destroyed numbered some hundred thousand, and their property was given over and paid into the imperial treasury.[120]

Several differences distinguish this persecution from that undertaken three decades beforehand. Most obviously, in this case only the Paulicians are targeted. Secondly, while Theophanes endorsed the earlier persecutions, the Continuator interprets Theodora's persecution as a disaster for the empire. Later Roman authors, such as Skylitzes and Zonaras, mirrored this judgement, but, unfortunately, we lack evidence for how contemporary Byzantines interpreted it.[121] Whether the persecution was as indiscriminate as the passage suggests is debatable. While the possibility of conversion is noted as Theodora's preferred outcome, the narrative never mentions any attempts to this end and instead goes on to detail the variety of execution methods her officials used, placing especial emphasis on the number of the slain. Skylitzes and Zonaras, both of whom follow the Continuator slavishly, attribute most of the blame to the misplaced zeal of Theodora's officials rather than the empress herself, but this generous view seems to arise from Theodora's restoration of the icons, which typically meant she received a favourable report from posterity. It is interesting that our sources place so much emphasis on Theodora. Her principal adviser Theoktistos is frequently slandered by later historians, including the Continuator, who blame him, often with little justification, for any of the empire's setbacks during these years. It would be unsurprising to see this sorry affair blotting his copybook, yet Theodora's association has endured.

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120 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati,* 4:16, pp. 236–237.

121 John Skylitzes, *Ioannis Scylitzae synopsis historiarum*, 8, ed. Hans P. Thurn (Berlin/New York, 1973), p. 92, l. 9–10. English translation: *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811–1057*, ed. and trans. John Wortley (Cambridge, 2010), p. 92; John Zonaras, *Ioannis Zonarae epitome historiarum*, 16:2, ed. Ludwig A. Dindorf, 5 vols, vol. 4 (Leipzig, 1871), p. 6.

Even if she were the primary instigator of the affair, it seems inconceivable that the regency council did not sanction it, presumably with some measure of violence intended from the outset. It may simply have been a case of systematically enforcing the death penalty which seems to have lapsed under her husband and his father.

Our understanding of the persecution is enriched by the *Vita Eustratii*, a life of Eustratios the Wonderworker, a monk who resided on the southern shore of the Propontis from the reign of Michael I until Basil I. The *Vita* includes an interesting episode in which Eustratios intercedes for a *meizoteros* who is falsely accused of being a Manichaean during the rule of Theodora and Michael.[122] This *meizoteros* inadvertently slighted a Manichaean who had begged for alms at his house and when the Manichaean was subsequently apprehended, he got revenge by naming the *meizoteros* as a fellow initiate.[123] His wife and daughter then entreated the saint, who miraculously appeared to the *meizoteros* in his cell, telling him he would be released after the lenient punishment of twenty lashes.[124] As with many hagiographies of our period, although the events recounted are doubtful, the depictions of day-to-day life are valuable in that they allow us to see attitudes and social ties which rarely manifest themselves in our historical sources. In this case, the *Vita* implies that some who were identified as Manichaeans were unjustly accused and that punishments were usually as severe as the Continuator implies, since it is implied that only supernatural intervention saved the *meizoteros* from a graver fate. There is a danger of reading too much into the source, but it seems that even the orthodox did not consider themselves safe from punishment if they fell under suspicion. The very fact that recourse to the intercession of a holy man is presented as the logical option may speak volumes about provincial distrust for the authorities in situations like these.

In a more general sense, this episode is valuable because it gives us further hints about how the machinery of persecution operated. The Continuator's account is frustratingly vague in this regard, perhaps not surprisingly given that he wrote a century afterward. From the little we can discern, it would

122 A *meizoteros* is a civil administrator. The office is attested largely on seals. See, for instance, Nicolas Oikonomidès, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des 9. et 10. siècles: introduction, texte, traduction et commentaire* (Paris, 1972), p. 317, n. 177; Friedhelm Winkelmann, *Byzantinische Rang und Ämterstruktur im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1985), pp. 50; 58; 123.

123 Note that this portrayal seems rather close to conventional Manichaeism. I am unaware of references to Paulicians begging elsewhere.

124 *Vita Eustratii*, 22, ed. Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kerameus, in *Ἀνάλεκτα τῆς ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς σταχυολογίας*, 4 (Jerusalem, 1897), pp. 382–383. See also Ludwig, "The Paulicians," p. 30.

seem that the theory and practice of punishment did not always align, since a variety of punishments and methods of execution were used. The dispatch of imperial officials to oversee the affair implies that some amount of central coordination was involved, but this was probably limited. Skylitzes goes beyond the Continuator by specifying the forenames of the officials involved, but his precisions are not entirely accurate.[125] In any case, those responsible presumably coopted the machinery of local administration, including its coercive apparatus, in order to fulfil their commission. Much like the persecutions some thirty years earlier, great emphasis is placed on the intensity of the affair, even if the figure of a hundred thousand victims is certainly inflated, either from simple exaggeration or to emphasise how disastrous the fallout was for the empire. Although the Continuator implies that the brunt of the measures were aimed at the area here known as "the east" (presumably corresponding to the Anatolikon, the Armeniakon, the Charsianon, and Kappadokia), the *Vita Eustratii*'s account implies that a similar approach was used elsewhere, albeit perhaps on a smaller scale. The identification strategies it posits suggest that the approach of Byzantine authorities was far from foolproof, but we lack sufficient evidence to corroborate this, largely because our sources hereafter focus on the conflict between Byzantines and Paulicians to the detriment of all else. Karbeas' rebellion marked the beginning of a new era between the two, when many Paulicians lay beyond the reach of the Roman executioner's hand and were often poised to strike back themselves.

125 Skylitzes inferred the forenames from *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, sometimes correctly, sometimes not. See Demetrios I. Polemis, "Some Cases of Erroneous Identification in the Chronicle of Skylitzes," *Byzantinoslavica* 26 (1965), pp. 75–76; Skylitzes, *Ioannis Scylitzae synopsis historiarum*, 8, p. 92, l. 11–12. Translation: *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, p. 92.

CHAPTER 6

Paulicians at Arms: The Islamic Alliance and Warfare against the Byzantines *c.*845–880

Few movements in history have transformed from a persecuted minority into a militarised force that would confront their former oppressors on the battlefield. Even fewer have done so as swiftly as the Paulicians, although the speed of this transition is understandable considering that martial reprisals had long been part of their arsenal. Still, the rapid changes of fortune which mark this chapter continually surprise. With the aid of 'Amr al-Aqṭa', Karbeas installed himself at Amara and Argaous on the Anti-Taurus Mountains in the aftermath of Theodora's persecutions, inaugurating an alliance that prospered sufficiently for the foundation of a new base at Tephrikē within a decade or so. This site proved an even greater threat to the Byzantines and would allow Chrysocheir's bravado to reach uncharted heights at the beginning of Basil I's reign, only a few years after the demise of Karbeas and 'Amr. This newfound defiance would not survive Chrysocheir's fall in flight at the battle of Bathyryax; although Tephrikē resisted for another few years, its threat was irreversibly diminished. In total, the Paulicians' apogee lasted only three and a half decades, a period characterised by its reverses as well as its successes, most of which mirrored the fortunes of their allies and enemies.

While all of this is well known, the extent of their imprint on the eastern frontier remains clouded in misconceptions. Most pervasive of all is the hyperbolic formulation of a Paulician state; a phrasing which implies a degree of political integration and ideological sophistication that is alien to the fragmented and heterogeneously populated frontier zone. The territorial extent of Paulician control was meagre at its greatest; hugging the twin lines of the Euphrates and Anti-Taurus Mountains, it barely extended further than Tephrikē in the north or Taranta in the south. Many of the settlements under its aegis, such as Lokana and Katabatala, are so obscure that modern geographers have despaired of locating them. Little is known of the social, cultural, or ethnic character of the area, but the limited testimony we do possess conveys something politically nebulous; a zone of weak ties and shifting loyalties, peopled by inhabitants who in various contexts might be termed Agarenes, Armenians, Romans, or Manichaeans. Wherever possible, this chapter will undercut the notion of a Paulician state, but it will increasingly focus on politico-military matters in preference to the socio-religious approach favoured thus far, for the

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simple reason that our sources are now entirely Byzantine or Islamic in character, with no Paulician testimony to counterbalance them. The greatest casualty of this is the religious dimension. Besides generic allegations of Manichaeism, the faith of the Paulicians now disappears from our view, as do the contested expressions of confessional identity that characterise the early years of the 9th century. In place of the *didaskaloi* a series of military leaders emerge, posing a new range of questions. Foremost among these are the extent of Islamic involvement in the fledgling raiding centres, the ethnic and religious composition of the area, and the role of Karbeas and Chrysocheir in regional political developments. Mapping the Paulicians' martial exploits onto the military history of the period will also be a persistent concern, largely due to disagreements and lacunae in our sources regarding the dates, itineraries, and even the outcomes of engagements. Our main sources (Genesios, the Continuator, Symeon the Logothete, al-Ṭabarī, and al-Mas'ūdī) all wrote in the 10th century, and although their use of contemporary sources often illuminates, their disagreements cannot always be easily reconciled. These difficulties are exemplified at the outset in the case of Karbeas' alliance with the Emirate of Melitene, which was more closely entwined with the fortunes of Roman-Islamic warfare than might initially appear.

1 The Battle of Mauropotamos and the Paulician-Islamic Alliance

The only noteworthy account of Karbeas' flight that remains to us is that of the Continuator. Genesios does not describe the origins of the Paulician threat to the empire, whereas the *History of the Paulicians* obfuscates Karbeas' origins, noting only that he appeared at their head at an indeterminate point after the death of Sergios.[1] The Continuator's account has its limitations, since it compresses a series of events which occurred over several decades into a single narrative, but its ambiguities can be unpicked to some degree with the aid of other sources:[2]

1 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 184–185, ed. Denise Papachryssanthou, trans. Jean Gouillard, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 66–67. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), pp. 91–92.

2 Paul Lemerle, "L'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure d'après les sources grecques," *Travaux et mémoires* 5 (1973), pp. 88–90.

Now, amongst the servitors of the general of the Anatoliacs – this was Theodotos of the family of Melissenos – there was a certain man by the name of Karbeas who held the office of protomandator and who prided himself and exulted in the faith of these aforesaid Paulicians. When he heard that his own father had been hung on the furca, he considered this the most terrible of things and, taking thought for his own life, he fled as a refugee[3] together with another five thousand adherents of this heresy to Amer who then occupied Melitene, and from there they went to the ameramnounes[4] and were received with great honour. And having given and likewise received guarantees, they soon set out against the land of the Romans; and on account of their victories, when their numbers had increased, they endeavoured to found cities for themselves, one called Argaoun, < and also Amara>. And again, after many who held fast to the same wickedness had streamed in there, they undertook to found another, calling it Tephrike. Setting out from these cities and assembling together, Amer of Melitene, whom the vulgar, somehow jumbling the letters, called Ambros, and Ales of Tarsus and also the wretched Karbeas, were unrelenting in their wilful devastation of the land of the Romans. But Ales, who was dispatched as ruler of some country of the Armenians, ended his life there sooner than he planned together with his ill-suited army, and Amer stood in civil war against his joint ruler – who was called the son of Skleros – and overcome by rivalry he thought it necessary to make war on him rather than others. The strife between them increased and they made war on each other to such an extent that from somewhat more than fifty thousand scarcely ten thousand men remained of their forces. When, therefore, Amer had overcome his enemies, he decided again with arrogance to take command and wage war against the Romans, joining forces with Karbeas. Against them Petronas took the field, who then exercised the office of domestikos. Officially, Bardas had been charged to perform this function, but because as imperial guardian he could not, of necessity, spare the time, he asked his brother, who was general of the Thrakesian theme, to direct and manage it in practice.[5]

3 *Φυγάς*. Deserter is another possible translation.

4 The name for the caliph in Greek sources. In this case, it is al-Wāthiq (842–847).

5 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur Libri I-IV*, 4:16, eds. J. Michael Featherstone, Juan Signes Codoñer (Boston/Berlin, 2015), pp. 236–239.

The basic outline of Paulician history given by this passage is relatively clear and coherent: Karbeas fled the empire, allied himself with ʻAmr al-Aqṭaʻ and received Argaous and Amara from him. When the numbers of his followers had swelled, he founded Tephrikē. This is all straightforward. The issues arise when the Continuator turns to Islamic affairs. His account implies that ʻAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Armanī died while ʻAmr was squabbling with the son of Skleros, but in fact ʻAmr died shortly before ʻAlī, both at the hands of Petronas' forces in 863. It is only after ʻAlī's death that the Continuator implies ʻAmr and Karbeas turned their attention to the empire, but they actually did so in the 850s at the latest. As a result, the latter half of the passage is certainly confused. This is rather unfortunate since it undermines our ability to make sense of the otherwise unknown conflict between ʻAmr and the son of Skleros. J. Eric Cooper and Michael Decker have identified the latter figure – and the Skleroi more generally – as Paulicians, but this hypothesis seems unfounded, as the Continuator does not relate Karbeas and his followers to this conflict, thereby implying that their faith was in no way a factor.[6] The clash perhaps took place during the late 840s or early 850s, when ʻAmr's campaigning was limited, thereby suggesting that he was occupied elsewhere. That the affair is so little understood is disappointing, since it indicates that Karbeas was not ʻAmr's only client, thereby raising the possibility that the latter attempted to counterbalance his protégés in some way.

Undoubtedly, however, the main point of interest is Karbeas' defection, since there are strong indications that his flight did not occur in the manner that the Continuator describes. Specifically, since ʻAmr raided Asia Minor soon after Theodora's persecution, it appears that Karbeas did not flee to Melitene, but that he deserted and joined with ʻAmr's army while it was still campaigning through Byzantine territory. The exact course of events remains conjectural, but it is clear that Roman defectors flocked to ʻAmr during some stages of the raid and, as a result of his greater prominence, it seems likely that Karbeas was among the first of these. The campaign itself was something of a watershed marking changes in regional norms of military strategy and, even more so, the erosion of caliphal power. Despite being first attested in 838, ʻAmr's star was on the rise beforehand, largely due to his high standing with al-Muʻtaṣim.[7] As we saw in the previous chapter, in the caliph's ambitious Amorion campaign

6 J. Eric Cooper, Michael J. Decker, *Life and Society in Byzantine Cappadocia* (Basingstoke, 2012), p. 233.

7 Bernd A. Vest, *Geschichte der Stadt Melitene und der umliegenden Gebiete: vom Vorabend der arabischen bis zum Abschluß der türkischen Eroberung* (*um 600–1124*), vol. 2 (Hamburg, 2007), pp. 663–664.

'Amr served under al-Afshīn and participated in the crucial victory over Theophilos at Anzes. At this time he was still a comparatively minor player, but this changed with a reorientation of Islamic raiding patterns that placed more emphasis on local commanders, as opposed to the increasingly sedentary caliphs. Al-Mu'taṣim himself was a military man, but the same was not true of al-Wāthiq or al-Mutawakkil, both of whom nevertheless retained a hold on affairs of state. The same was not true of their immediate successors, who were most concerned with self-preservation amid the court intrigues of Sāmarrā, where the all-powerful Turkish military elite often dispensed with them at will.[8] Hence, for most of their careers 'Amr and 'Alī b. Yaḥyā al-Armanī held a level of freedom and authority that would have been unthinkable in earlier decades.[9]

'Amr's raid of 844 is his first attested campaign against the empire, which was most probably an opportunistic venture designed to test Romanía's defences after the death of the militarily experienced Theophilos.[10] The raid culminated in a victory over Theodora's principal adviser Theoktistos at the battle of Mauropotamos, whose generic name (literally, black river) has complicated locating the site. In light of the account offered here, the encounter probably took place in Bithynia.[11] Our most notable account of the battle, that of Symeon the Logothete, does not mention 'Amr's route.[12] It is possible that it was similar to that he used in 863, when he marched north through Sebastaia towards Amaseia and Amisos, in which case he would then have proceeded

8 Hugh N. Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century*, 3rd ed. (Abingdon, 2016), pp. 142–150; Matthew S. Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords: A History of the Turkish Military of Samarra* (*A.H. 200-275/815-889 C.E.*) (Albany, 2001), pp. 75–140.

9 Peter von Sivers, "Taxes and Trade in the 'Abbāsid Thughūr, 750-962/133-351," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 25:1 (1982), pp. 86–88.

10 Vasiliev equates 'Amr's campaign with one conducted by a certain Abu Sa'īd, as described in the poems of Abū Tammām and Buḥturī. See Alexander A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes: T.1 La dynastie d'Amorium* (*820–867*), trans. Henri Grégoire, Marius Canard (Brussels, 1935), p. 196 n. 1; pp. 400–404.

11 Other locations have been proposed, notably in Kappadokia. Both Lemerle and Treadgold prefer Bithynia. Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 90–91; Warren T. Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, 1997), p. 943, n. 3. There is also some debate as to whether the battle site refers to a river or a town. See John Bagnell Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire: From the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I* (*A.D. 802–867*) (London, 1912), p. 274, n. 4; Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes: T.1 La dynastie d'Amorium*, pp. 196–197, especially n. 2.

12 A substantially identical account is found in redaction A of the Continuator of George the Monk. See George the Monk Continuatus, 5, *Theophanes continuatus, Ioannes Caminiata, Symeon Magister, Georgius monachus*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, 1838), pp. 814–815.

westward until he encountered Theoktistos in Bithynia, but other routes are eminently possible.[13] It is unlikely that he came close to the Anatolikon, but it nevertheless seems that Karbeas defected to him during the westward advance, even though desertions also occurred at Mauropotamos itself. Symeon prefaces his account of the fighting with a description of Theoktistos' campaign in Crete, which I have included here for reasons that will become apparent:

> [Theodora] sent Theoktistos the logothete against Crete, who, after departing with a great host and exceedingly large provisions, terrified the Agarenes, who were still incapable of contending with his army. But he was even more terrified than them and embraced flight when he understood that [Theodora] was to choose another emperor. This matter astounded him, so with the connivance of the Saracens and by bribing those with him, the affair persuaded him to return to the city and leave the army to perform martial deeds against those in Crete. In this way after making a bad impression in Crete he returned from there seeming worse and even more unlucky.
>
> For at that time Amer had already marched out against Romanía and was plundering and destroying all the land under his feet. Again, it was the same Theoktistos, the most faithful and reliable, that Theodora and Michael sent out with great power against Amer. And this man, after marching forth and making war against Amer, was defeated and overthrown at the so-called Mauropotamos, at which many were killed and some deserted to Amer as a result of the harshness and onerousness of the logothete. Among these was one Theophanes Pharganos, who was distinguished from the many by his strength and bravery. At some later time, he defected to the Christians, having taken a promise of safety.[14]

Leaving aside the matter of Karbeas' defection momentarily, the key to contextualising this passage is Theoktistos, who is calumniated by many sources, including Symeon and the Continuator.[15] Although Symeon explains Theoktistos' return to the capital by his paranoia that Theodora would choose a new emperor and undercut his position, this hardly explains why

13 See Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:25, pp. 254–256; Vest, *Melitene*, vol. 2, p. 690.

14 Symeon the Logothete, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae chronicon*, 131:3–4, ed. Staffan Wahlgren (Berlin/New York, 2006), pp. 232–233.

15 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:39, pp. 286–289.

he immediately left the city upon his return. The real reason why he made such haste across the Aegean is obvious: to meet the impending threat of ʿAmr's army, which had already begun plundering Romanía. Theoktistos' recall implies that there was no concerted resistance on the part of the armies of the eastern themata, which is most comprehensible if Karbeas, whose loyalty to the empire had evaporated after the execution of his father, had defected in the course of ʿAmr's march. While it is possible that Karbeas was among the defectors at Mauropotamos itself, it makes most sense to propose that he was among the first to turn his coat, since this would best explain why he enjoyed consistently high favour with ʿAmr, despite his relatively low rank. The Continuator notes that both travelled to Sāmarrā and were received with great honour by al-Wāthiq, which seems much more fitting in light of a victory over the empress's most powerful adviser rather than a simple defection.

Further evidence that Karbeas' role was out of the ordinary is provided by al-Masʿūdī's *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa al-ishrāf* (*The Book of Notification and Verification*), which notes that he became a *mawlā* of the family of Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn.[16] *Mawlā* status attached a non-Arab client to an Arab patron, whose reputation and prestige enhanced the client's ability to participate in Islamic society.[17] In Karbeas' case, his patron stemmed from one of the most prominent contemporary Muslim families. At the beginning of the 9th century, Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn had founded a dynasty which ruled Khurāsān more or less autonomously of the caliphate, while another branch of the family remained in the west. At the time, this western offshoot was headed by Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm, who served four caliphs with distinction in his role as chief of security in Baghdād. It seems most likely that a member of this second branch of the family acted as Karbeas' sponsor, since the former capital lay not far downstream from Sāmarrā.[18] As in the cases of Theophobos and Thomas the Slav, it is unclear whether Karbeas was required to convert, but the fact that al-Masʿūdī considers Paulician identity distinct in the relevant passage suggests not, as does the intriguing fact that he consistently describes Karbeas as a patriarch in

16 al-Masʿūdī, *Maçoudi: Le livre de l'avertissement et de la revision*, ed. and trans. Bernard Carra de Vaux (Paris, 1896), p. 248. See also Vest, *Geschichte der Stadt Melitene*, vol. 2, p. 681. He is stated to be a *mawla* of Ṭāhir himself in both Ahmad Nazmi, "The Paulicians (Al-Bayāliqa) in Muslim Sources and Their Role in Wars between Arabs and Byzantines," *Studia Arabistyczne i Islamistyczne* 9 (2001), p. 53 and Alexander Asa Eger, *The Islamic-Byzantine Frontier: Interaction and Exchange among Muslim and Christian Communities* (London, 2014), p. 290.

17 On *mawālī*, see the useful collection of studies in Monique Bernards, John A. Nawas, eds., *Patronate and Patronage in Early and Classical Islam* (Leiden, 2005).

18 Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, pp. 139–140.

both the *Murūj* and *Tanbīh*.[19] In fact, our Muslim sources invariably portray Paulicians as Christians who differed from Romans in some matters of faith, thereby implying that no systematic attempts at conversion were made.[20] Nevertheless, considerable efforts were devoted to making Karbeas a loyal and effective Muslim client. The most obvious indication of this is ʿAmr's bestowal of Argaous and Amara upon him. As we saw in the previous chapter, the possibility of a more longstanding Paulician presence in the vicinity of the former cannot be discounted, but the alliance opened a new phase for the site. With all of the above taken into consideration, it seems evident that Karbeas was held in much higher regard in Muslim society than others who defected from the empire in this period. The most convincing explanation for this is that given by the Continuator: the execution of his father and persecution of his fellow believers had made him an implacable enemy of Romanía.

Whether the Roman defectors at Mauropotamos comprised part of Karbeas' following is unclear. Symeon's allusion to Theophanes Pharganos, who eventually returned to the empire, regained high rank, and even played a leading role in the murder of Theoktistos, shows that flight was not an irreversible decision.[21] However, it is difficult to see how a figure of Karbeas' rank drew such a significant following unless many Paulicians had left alongside him when he defected from the army of the Anatolikon, so perhaps other Roman defectors served under him. His installation on the Anti-Taurus precipitated an influx of new Paulician refugees according to both the Continuator and Peter of Sicily, while the latter also notes that all manner of adventurers and unsavoury characters flocked to the area.[22] This dynamic seems very likely; later descriptions of the area suggest a heterogeneous ethno-cultural makeup and disclaim the notion that the new polity was homogeneously Paulician in character. As we

19 Pseudo-Photios claims that Karbeas feigned a belief in Islam. See Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 144, ed. Wanda Conus-Wolska, trans. Joseph Paramelle, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 170–171. Chrysocheir too is termed a patriarch, although the usage is not attested outside al-Masʿūdī in either case. See Nazmi, "The Paulicians," p. 54; al-Masʿūdī, *Les prairies d'or*, ed. and trans. Charles Barbier de Meynard, 9 vols, vol. 8 (Paris, 1874), p. 75. English translation: *Masudi: The Meadows of Gold*, eds. Paul Lunde, Caroline Stone (Abingdon, 2010), p. 319; al-Masʿūdī, *Le livre de l'avertissement*, p. 248.

20 Al-Masʿūdī states that the Paulicians follow the teaching of Paul of Samosata, whose beliefs he positions midway between Christianity and Zoroastrianism. See al-Masʿūdī, *Le livre de l'avertissement*, p. 208.

21 Symeon the Logothete, *Chronicon*, 131:19–21, pp. 240–241.

22 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 185, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 91–92.

shall see, Islamic involvement in the area was probably significant, particularly in the early years.

Rather more obscure is the extent of continuity with earlier Paulician modes of organisation. Nothing in the above can be straightforwardly aligned with the communities of Baanes or Sergios. From this point onwards, the religious face of the Paulicians essentially disappears to us and the martial one, which thus far has only appeared in isolated instances, becomes dominant. It is difficult to determine the underlying reasons for this shift, largely because it coincides with a transition in our sources from predominantly Paulician witnesses to Byzantine ones, as well as fundamental changes in the movement's allegiances. It seems undeniable that these factors have occluded some important developments from our view, since although religious matters are rarely acknowledged by Roman sources, the alterity of the Paulicians' faith is frequently heeded by Islamic works. Both al-Mas'ūdī and Qudāma b. Ja'far consider them to be Romans who differ from the majority in matters of faith, whereas, as noted above, the former also terms Karbeas and Chrysocheir patriarchs, implying that the distinction between religious and military leaders may be overstated.[23] We are certainly dealing with a reconfiguration of the way that Romans demarcated Paulician identity; the pivotal question is whether this is extreme enough to argue that it created a link between the eras of Sergios and Karbeas which never existed in the first place. On balance, it seems that this might be pushing things too far. There are, for instance, indications of a Paulician presence at Argaous before Karbeas and Sergios is linked with this site by both the *Treatise* and the *History*. The religious and martial aspects of Paulician identity always coexisted uneasily and from Karbeas onward they seem to have realigned in a way that largely obscures the religious side from our view. Still, even if this extreme degree of discontinuity cannot be sustained, more modest reconfigurations of doctrine, praxis, and outlook may have occurred, particularly after events as momentous as Theodora's persecutions and the settling of Argaous.

2 Paulician Settlement and Raiding under Karbeas

The year after Mauropotamos, the regimes of Theodora and al-Wāthiq agreed a prisoner exchange that did not include the most prominent of the Amorion captives, whom the caliph had executed earlier in the year, perhaps as a show

23 For the remarks of Qudāma, see below.

of force amid discontent with his imposition of Mu'tazilite doctrine.[24] Soon after negotiating the exchange, the newly appointed governor of the frontier, Aḥmad b. Sa'īd b. Salm b. Qutaybah al-Bāhilī, launched a winter raid against Roman territory, but lost many of his men to the elements and was promptly relieved of his command by the furious caliph.[25] Despite these blows to cross-confessional relations, warfare all but ceased along the frontier until the 850s. Theoktistos, meanwhile, if the chroniclers are to be believed, contrived to foist the blame for Mauropotamos onto Theodora's brother Bardas, who was thereupon exiled.[26] In this climate of peace, 'Amr and Karbeas were free to travel to Sāmarrā, which must have occurred before al-Wāthiq's death in 847. Karbeas presumably spent the early years of their alliance establishing himself at Argaous and its environs. From 'Amr's perspective, it made sound strategic sense to install a client in this region. The location of the site, which lies close to the passes around Melitene, facilitated raiding into Roman territory, as well as being ideally positioned to support Melitene in the event of an attack such as that which Theophilos had launched in 837.[27] Lying in a plain enclosed by mountain ridges, Melitene provided ready access to the Anatolian plateau and therefore posed a conspicuous threat to Byzantine lands, but this location also made it more vulnerable to attack.[28] The Islamic and Paulician settlements were therefore mutually supportive, which is reflected in the frequency with which 'Amr and Karbeas campaigned together. Any Byzantine offensives through the region were compelled to target Paulician lands before advancing to Melitene, which gave the latter advanced warning and could potentially cut the invader's supply lines or ability to retreat. Whether these early years saw concerted raids against Byzantine territory is unclear. Both the Continuator and the *History* imply that raids began soon after Karbeas' installation at Argaous, but al-Ṭabarī, our best Islamic source for the period, does not

24 Athina Kolia-Dermitzaki, "The Execution of the Forty-Two Martyrs of Amorion: Proposing an Interpretation," *Al-Masāq* 14:2 (2002), pp. 142–151. On the Mu'tazilite controversy, debates about the createdness of the Qur'ān, and the inquisition associated with these (the *Miḥna*), see John A. Nawas, *Al-Ma'mūn, the Inquisition, and the Quest for Caliphal Authority* (Atlanta, 2015).

25 al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-al-mulūk. The history of al-Ṭabarī*, 40 vols, vol. 34, trans. Joel L. Kraemer (Albany, 1989), pp. 43–44.

26 According to Symeon, Bardas incited the desertion at Mauropotamos. Symeon the Logothete, *Chronicon*, 131:5, p. 233.

27 For this campaign, see Juan Signes Codoñer, *The Emperor Theophilos and the East, 829–842: Court and Frontier in Byzantium during the Last Phase of Iconoclasm* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 263–278.

28 Mark Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium 600–1025* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 310.

mention anything of the sort. The Continuator implies that Karbeas initially campaigned alone, so the lack of direct Islamic involvement may explain al-Ṭabarī's silence.[29] 'Amr does not seem to have resumed active campaigning until the middle of the 850s. By the beginning of the decade, the peace was breaking down and 'Alī b. Yaḥyā al-Armanī began to lead the annual summer expedition regularly, so 'Amr's lack of activity during the first half of the decade may reflect his preoccupation with the son of Skleros, the co-ruler noted by the Continuator, at this time.

In any case, within a decade or so of their establishment at Argaous, a new Paulician stronghold was founded at Tephrikē. The exact date of the foundation is unknown, but the site would later become synonymous with the movement, especially in Basil I's reign. As we shall see, it is often characterised as an Islamic settlement in our sources. Tephrikē had probably already been established on a steady footing by the time of its first reference in 856, when al-Ṭabarī refers to a Byzantine campaign which entered Islamic territory from its direction.[30] He does not mention whether an attempt was made on the fortress at this time, but subsequent events would show that it was a formidable target for any would-be assailer. Aside from being defensible, the site was comparatively distant from Melitene and was ideally situated to encourage migration from traditional Paulician areas, such as the Chaldia and Armeniakon themata.[31] As noted beforehand, militaristic opportunists of all persuasions also congregated in an area which combined the dynamics of the no-man's land and the shatter zone. The site also had economic potential, insofar as it facilitated control of nearby silver and iron mines, although there is some doubt about whether these were exploited during this period. Cooper and Decker have posited that the increase in silver coinage during the reign of Basil I could be explained by his capture of Tephrikē and its neighbouring mines, but evidence for mining is scarce in this part of Asia Minor at the time.[32] The period saw widespread mining activity across the Islamic world, often at private initiative, so it is at least plausible that assistance was secured from the neighbouring emirates to

29 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati,* 4:16, pp. 236–239; Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 185, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 91–92.

30 al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 34, pp. 146–147.

31 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 184, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 91; Milan Loos, "Le mouvement paulicien à Byzance," *Byzantinoslavica* 24 (1963), p. 282.

32 Cooper, Decker, *Byzantine Cappadocia*, p. 71. See also Adon A. Gordus, David M. Metcalf, "The Alloy Content of the Byzantine Miliaresion and the Question of the Reminting of Islamic Silver," *Hamburger Beiträge zur Numismatik* 24 (1970), p. 16.

this end, but the isolated location of the site, the logistical difficulties, and the lack of preexisting infrastructure argue against a substantial mining operation under the Paulicians.[33] There seems to have been little settlement at Tephrikē for centuries and, when viewed in a broader context, the Paulician presence in the area was short-lived and relatively precarious. Notably, since the site was captured late during Basil's reign (878/79) it seems a poor contender for explaining the observed silver influx. If the mineral resources of the area were not exploited during our period, Tephrikē was probably dependent on income from raiding and prisoner-taking, as well as any assistance that came from Melitene, to be financially sustainable.

Concrete evidence for an Islamic presence at Tephrikē is lacking, but must at least be conjectural given that it is frequently identified as an Islamic city in Byzantine sources. A tantalising glimpse of what might have been is offered by a much later source. At some point during the late 12th or early 13th century, the famous traveller ʿAlī b. Abī Bakr al-Harawī al-Mawṣilī visited a mountain sanctuary known as al-Abrūḳ; a site which presumably corresponds to our Tephrikē, or Abrīḳ as it is known in Islamic sources.[34] In his account, now preserved in Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī's *Muʿjam al-buldān* (*Geographical Dictionary*), the site attracts Christian and Muslim visitors alike; the pilgrim is directed either to mosque or church according to their spiritual needs and can behold the bodies of martyrs whose memory was claimed by both confessions.[35] The account is far too late to have a decisive impact on our interpretation here, but if Tephrikē did span confessional boundaries long after imperial control over the area had been lost, the possibility of an early Muslim presence must at least be considered. Taking a broad perspective, the impression gained thus far is that the Paulician territories were little more than an annex to the nearby emirate; an impression corroborated by the portrayal of Karbeas in version *Γ* of the *42 Martyrs*. In this narrative, he is considered little more than a cipher for the Islamic powers, handing Kallistos to them once he receives his prisoner.[36]

33 Michael G. Morony, "The Early Islamic Mining Boom," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 62 (2019), pp. 166–221.

34 Ibrik is the transliteration given in al-Masʿūdī, *Les prairies d'or*, vol. 8, p. 75. Translation: *Masudi: The Meadows of Gold*, p. 319; al-Masʿūdī, *Le livre de l'avertissement*, p. 248.

35 For a translation, see Guy Le Strange, "On the Mediæval Castle and Sanctuary of Abrīḳ, the Modern Arabkir; with Some Further Notes on Mesopotamia as Described by Ibn Serapion," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1895), pp. 740–742. See also Vest, *Geschichte der Stadt Melitene*, vol. 2, pp. 679–680.

36 Michael, Monk and Synkellos, "De XLII martyribus Amoriensibus narrationes et carmina sacra," in *Zapiski Imperatorskoĭ akademīi nauk po Istoriko-filologicheskomu otdĭelenīiu.*

The account is evidently stylised, but we have still seen nothing which corroborates the idea of an independent Paulician state. It is now time to turn our attention to this overblown term, which has had a life of its own in recent decades.[37]

To my knowledge, it was first invoked by Garsoïan, who consistently refers to a Paulician state in the mountainous region west of Melitene. Although no explanation is given for the usage, her temporal confines imply that the Paulicians' installation at Argaous and overt opposition to the empire were necessary prerequisites for this statehood.[38] Lemerle, on the other hand, associates the term more closely with the establishment of Tephrikē, whose independence from Melitene in his view allowed the Paulicians to practice their religion without outside interference, thereby attracting their coreligionists to the area.[39] The formulation has now become a fixture in scholarship, often with scant justification for the usage.[40] I have no fondness for disputing terminology for its own sake, but a reading which inflates the political independence and religious homogeneity of the lands in question risks eliciting considerable misunderstanding, particularly when this may be weaponized by modern agendas.[41] The Paulician presence on the Anti-Taurus lasted around

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Mémoires de l'Académie impériale des sciences de St.-Pétersbourg. Classe historico-philologique. VIIIe série 7:2, eds. Vasily G. Vasil'evsky, Petr V. Nikitin (1905), p. 29.

37 For a similar critique, which also posits significant Islamic involvement, see Anne E. Redgate, "Catholicos John III's *Against the Paulicians* and the Paulicians of Tephrike," in *Armenian Sebastia/Sivas and Lesser Armenia*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Los Angeles, 2004), pp. 108–109. Dadoyan also posits significant links between Muslims and Paulicians, although this forms part of a wider thesis linking heterodox minorities with Muslim powers over several centuries (her paradigm also includes the Khurramiyya and T'ondrakec'i, for instance). See Seta B. Dadoyan, *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World. Volume One: The Arab Period in Armīniyah – Seventh to Eleventh Centuries* (New Brunswick, 2011), pp. 91–102, especially p. 97.

38 Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 53; 124–129.

39 Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 95–96.

40 This should be read as a consequence of the pervasive influence of Garsoïan and Lemerle on subsequent scholarship, rather than reflecting any deficiencies in these later works, which are often otherwise laudable. See among many others Yuri Stoyanov, *The Other God: Dualist Religions from Antiquity to the Cathar Heresy* (New Haven/London, 2000), p. 154; Abed el-Rahman Tayyara, "Muslim-Paulician Encounters and Early Islamic Anti-Christian Writings," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 27:4 (2016), p. 475; Christine Caldwell Ames, *Medieval Heresies: Christianity, Judaism and Islam* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 122.

41 Such readings are rare in the case of the Paulicians. However, the idea of a Paulician state has been appropriated by some Banat Bulgarians in Romania in order to further their claims to minority status. See Rossitza Guentcheva, "Debating Language: The Bulgarian Communities in Romania after 1989," in *Language, Ethnicity and the State. Volume*

thirty-five years at the longest estimate and there are clear indications that even at its most autonomous Islamic influence was significant. The only detailed description of the area, which derives from the *Vita Basilii*'s account of Basil I's 873 campaign, paints a diverse ethno-cultural picture, as we would expect of a region where power structures were not traditionally hegemonic. This passage will receive full discussion in its proper place, but even elsewhere the scattered indications we possess imply that the lands in question were not quintessentially Paulician. Nothing encapsulates this better than the recurring portrayal of Tephrikē as an Islamic city.

The tendency is true in both Greek and Arabic works. As noted several times, Symeon the Logothete seems to have no conception of the Paulicians during these years and while referring to Basil I's unsuccessful attack on Tephrikē in 871, he refers to its forces as Agarenes.[42] The same tendency is found in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, which also describes Tephrikē as populated by Agarenes while relating Leo Argyros' campaigns in the area during the reign of Michael III.[43] Even though the *Vita Basilii* has a well-rounded understanding of the Paulicians, it too conforms to the trend, describing both Taranta and Tephrikē as populated by "Ishmaelites."[44] Many of these allusions are found in 10th-century sources and are therefore connected with the contemporary reinvention of the Paulicians in Byzantine historiography, but the Islamic connection cannot solely result from retroactive Byzantine readings, since the same impulse is found in Muslim sources. Al-Mas'ūdī, also writing in the mid-10th century, characterises Tephrikē as a former Islamic city in his *Tanbīh* when he notes the frontier towns lost by Muslims in recent times.[45] While doing so, he remains aware that the site was inhabited by the Paulicians, thereby suggesting that, in some contexts at least, the settlement could be assigned to both confessions.

A paradox underlies all of this, since although Tephrikē is the Paulician centre most often associated with Islam, its foundation is often explained by an attempt to break free of Muslim oversight. This rationale is stated in the *History of the Paulicians* and plays a crucial role in Lemerle's reading of

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2: Minority Languages in Eastern Europe Post-1989, ed. Camille C. O'Reilly (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 58–59.

42 Symeon the Logothete, *Chronicon*, 132:7, p. 262, l. 42–43.

43 Theophanes Continuatus VI, 27, in *Theophanes continuatus, Ioannes Caminiata, Symeon Magister, Georgius monachus*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, 1838), p. 374, l. 11–19.

44 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur liber quo Vita Basilii Imperatoris amplectitur*, 38, ed. and trans. Ihor Ševčenko (Berlin/Boston, 2011), pp. 140–141.

45 al-Mas'ūdī, *Le livre de l'avertissement*, p. 248.

events.[46] By contrast, Argaous, which was more closely associated with the advent of the Islamic alliance, is never considered an Islamic site, although admittedly it is infrequently attested in our sources, particularly Arabic ones. This contradiction implies that the inconsistent labelling of Paulician sites is largely rhetorical in function. It is difficult to dismiss the suspicion that both Byzantine and Islamic actors tended to subsume the Paulicians' activity on the eastern frontier within the dominant paradigm of Roman-Islamic warfare, especially by the 10th century, when their memory had receded somewhat. It seems that the underlying reasons were different in each case: associating Paulicians with Islam allowed Byzantines to discredit them by questioning their Christian roots, whereas Muslims could press their territorial claims by considering Paulician territories Islamic. This makes it difficult to ascertain whether a sizable Islamic presence ever existed at Argaous or Tephrikē, but it is at least evident that Muslim support was crucial for the Paulicians' installation in the area, particularly during Karbeas' leadership.

This is corroborated by the close cooperation between himself and 'Amr in military affairs.[47] Raiding by the two was limited in the immediate aftermath of Mauropotamos due to the cessation of hostilities across the frontier, but grew increasingly common from the mid-850s onward. In 855 Theodora's regency ended and Michael III began to rule on his own initiative, albeit with his recalled uncle Bardas, who had conspired to murder the logothete Theoktistos earlier in the year. The chronology of warfare between empire and caliphate is unusually difficult to reconstruct after Michael reaches maturity. Two issues in particular stand out: firstly, the hostility of historians of the Macedonian

46 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 184, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 91; Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 95–96.

47 Besides vignettes of Basil I praying for the downfall of Chrysocheir and Tephrikē, there is little religious symbolism in contemporary Byzantine accounts of warfare against Muslims or Paulicians, let alone anything that could be considered akin to holy war, which remains a topic of dispute in our period and beyond. While warfare was certainly invested with religious significance, this does not seem to have translated into an overly pejorative view of the empire's enemies in the East, at least in the sources covered here. In addition to the studies cited on holy war in the introduction, see Angeliki E. Laiou, "On Just War in Byzantium," in *Το Ελληνικον. Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis Jr.*, eds. John S. Langdon, Stephen W. Reinert, Jelisaveta S. Allen (New Rochelle, 1993), pp. 153–177; George T. Dennis, "Defenders of the Christian People: Holy War in Byzantium," in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, eds. Angeliki E. Laiou, Roy P. Mottahedeh (Washington, D.C., 2001), pp. 31–39; Yuri Stoyanov, "Apocalypticizing Warfare: from Political Theology to Imperial Eschatology in Seventh to Early Eighth-Century Byzantium," in *The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition: A Comparative Perspective*, eds. Kevork B. Bardakjian, Sergio La Porta (Leiden, 2014), pp. 380–433.

dynasty to Michael, which led them to pass over the victories of his reign in silence; and secondly, a recurring confusion in the sources between Samosata and Arsamosata (although the confusion often results from the Arabic designations Sumaysāṭ and Shimshāṭ), both of which were frequent targets of Byzantine raids at the time.[48] While ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Armanī's series of summer expeditions in the early 850s effectively reopened hostilities, the caliphate's focus could not yet be brought to bear on the west, since its control of the Caucasus had become increasingly shaky after renewed attempts at imposing taxation led to the Armenian revolt of 850–855. This uprising, which caused the Arcruni and Bagratuni princes to take up arms, was ruthlessly suppressed by Bughā al-Kabir, who also took the opportunity to dispense with Isḥāq b. Ismāʿīl, the renegade Emir of Tiflis who had refused to aid him.[49] At sea, meanwhile, the Muslim presence on Crete proved a point of contention, which led the imperial navy to launch an ambitious naval attack on Damietta in Egypt in 853; an undertaking that was perhaps repeated in the following year.[50]

On land, the first Byzantine counterattack occurred in 856, but the campaign in question exemplifies many of the interpretive difficulties noted above. The traditional interpretation of the incursion, which is founded on the account of al-Ṭabarī, is unconvincing on several counts and accordingly requires attention here. Specifically, earlier readings attribute the Byzantine campaign to Petronas and consider that it targeted Arsamosata rather than Samosata.[51] Neither of these points are evident from al-Ṭabarī's account, which reads as follows:

> In this year, the Byzantines advanced from the area of Samosata, following the summer expedition of ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Armanī, as far as Āmid. They then advanced from the frontier towns of the Jazīrah and plundered a number of villages, taking captive about 10,000 men. They entered from the direction of Tephrikē, a village [in the control] of Karbeas. They

48 For Michael's successes, see Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 150–152.

49 al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 34, pp. 113–124; Tim W. Greenwood, "Armenian Neighbours (600–1045)," in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire: c.500–1492*, ed. Jonathan Shepard (Cambridge, 2008), p. 349; Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium*, pp. 215–216.

50 Wladyslaw B. Kubiak, "The Byzantine Attack on Damietta in 853 and the Egyptian Navy in the 9th Century," *Byzantion* 40:1 (1970), pp. 53–59; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 34, pp. 124–127.

51 Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes: T.1 La dynastie d'Amorium*, pp. 233–234; Treadgold, *A History of Byzantine State*, p. 451.

> then departed, returning to their territory. Karbeas, ʻUmar b. ʻAbdallāh al-Aqṭaʻ, and a contingent of volunteers pursued them but did not catch one of them. ʻUmar wrote to ʻAlī b. Yaḥyā to make a winter expedition into their territory.[52]

The laconic retelling of this episode raises several issues, such as the failure of ʻAmr and Karbeas to effectively mobilise despite what must have been a lengthy Byzantine campaign, and the fact that the Byzantine army seems to have entered Islamic territory from two distinct directions (firstly, by shadowing ʻAlī's retreating forces in Kilikia and secondly, via Tephrikē). The traditional interpretation resolves this by positing a single campaign against Tephrikē, Arsamosata, and Amida, but the conundrum can best be explained by positing a two-pronged attack. According to this view, the main Byzantine force took a southern route, targeting Samosata (as al-Ṭabarī himself states, rather than Arsamosata) and Amida, while a secondary detachment attacked Tephrikē and Melitene, thereby preventing ʻAmr and Karbeas from cutting off the main Byzantine raid in the south. This best explains the uncertain geography of the campaign and the inability of ʻAlī, ʻAmr, and Karbeas to unite their forces. The final outstanding issue is the leader of the Byzantine attack. The campaign has traditionally been attributed to Petronas, but the rationale is rather flimsy and rests only on the Continuator's reference to him assuming the command against ʻAmr and Karbeas in lieu of his brother Bardas.[53] But the Continuator does not give further detail or a clear timeframe and, as we have already seen, his account of warfare in the east during these years is confused at best. Without clearer evidence, Petronas' involvement should remain conjectural, especially as its seems two Roman armies were involved. However we reconstruct the offensive, the establishment of Tephrikē caused the empire a strategic headache on the eastern frontier.[54] It did not suffer lasting damage during this attack and, while Byzantine forces seem to have retained the initiative throughout, the installation of a Paulician bulwark strengthened the defence on the Islamic side appreciably.

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52 al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 34, pp. 146–147 and especially n. 490 on the confusion between Arsamosata and Samosata.

53 Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes: T.1 La dynastie d'Amorium*, p. 233; Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati,* 4:16, pp. 238–239.

54 Treadgold links the danger posed by Melitene and Tephrikē to the creation of the new Thema of Koloneia. See Treadgold, *A History of Byzantine State*, p. 451.

Campaigning during the rest of Michael's reign occasions somewhat fewer issues.[55] The initiatives of Leo Argyros against the Agarenes of Tephrikē (presumably meaning the Paulicians), which are unmentioned outside *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, cannot be placed reliably, but the general chronology of events otherwise seems secure, barring the possibility that some raids may have gone unremarked.[56] The next development of importance was a renewed attempt at capturing Samosata in 859 by Michael III and Bardas, which our sources note went awry when Muslim forces sallied during the eucharistic rites, thereby scattering the Romans and breaking the siege.[57] The Continuator and Genesios both consider this campaign to be directed towards 'Amr to some degree or other, despite the distance of Samosata from his lands, but the presence of Karbeas at the battle implies that Muslim-aligned forces had congregated on the city to break the siege. In the Continuator's account, Karbeas' valour is given special emphasis, particularly for his capture of the generals Abesalom Tzaggotoubos and Seon Palatinos. The resulting vignette is the only depiction of Karbeas' character we are given in our sources. Unfortunately, it is hardly an accurate one. After receiving the ransom payments for the generals, Karbeas asks the two about the virulence of their sexual urges and, while Seon denies that these afflict him, Abesalom, discerning the extent of Karbeas' depravity, pleads his guilt. Thereupon, he is set free while Seon's bonds remain.[58] It goes without saying that this account owes more to slander than reality, but it is interesting in revealing a paradox about Karbeas. Here he appears deep in Islamic lands, where we would not necessarily expect to find him, yet our

55 An exception is the reference in *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV to Michael's panicked reaction at hearing that 'Amr had reached as far as Malagina while Michael was busying himself at the hippodrome, having earlier ordered that the signals which warned of Muslim invasion should not be lit. This episode does not correspond with any known raid of 'Amr, since in both 861 and 863 Michael himself fought 'Amr well within the interior of Asia Minor. The itinerary best fits 'Amr's campaign of 844, but since Michael was only a child at the time, he cannot have played as active a role as the Continuator claims. Almost certainly, the affair has been fabricated to undercut Michael's reputation. Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:35–36, pp. 280–283.

56 The campaigns of Bughā al-Kabir against Byzantine lands sometime between 858 and 861 have, for instance, almost vanished from the historical record. See Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords*, p. 93; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 34, pp. 151; 178.

57 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:13, eds. Anni Lesmüller-Werner, Hans P. Thurn, (Berlin/New York, 1978), p. 65. English translation: *Genesios. On the Reigns of the Emperors*, ed. Anthony Kaldellis (Canberra, 1998), pp. 81–82; Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:23, pp. 250–253.

58 Genesios does not mention this exchange. Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:23, pp. 251–252.

Byzantine sources do not refer to him while recounting Islamic raids into the empire. His presence at Samosata implies that his ties to the nearby emirates were strong and, while the reasons for this were no doubt many, the predominant factors were probably his dependence on ʿAmr in both military and economic terms.

Karbeas' meagre prominence in Byzantine sources is difficult to explain, but it seems to arise because the most important witnesses, Genesios and the Continuator, focus squarely on the person of ʿAmr, who is portrayed as the empire's most notable enemy at the time, somewhat surprisingly since ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Armanī is given a higher prominence in Islamic sources and assailed Asia Minor more frequently. One of ʿAmr's most successful raids occurred in 861, when he targeted the Black Sea ports of Amisos and Sinope, in the process inflicting a serious defeat on Michael III at Anzes; the same site that he and al-Afshīn had defeated Michael's father Theophilos almost a quarter of a century before.[59] Karbeas is not mentioned in the course of this campaign by our Byzantine sources, but al-Ṭabarī notes that ʿAmr led the summer expedition during the relevant year (860/61) and whereas he carried off either 7000 or 15,000 livestock (the manuscripts disagree on the number), Karbeas seized 5000.[60] It therefore seems that the two campaigned in close cooperation, if not necessarily together. It is less clear whether the same was true two years later, when ʿAmr finally met his match in the person of Petronas. In 863 the summer expedition was led by Jaʿfar b. Dīnār, whose permission ʿAmr successfully requested for his own raid. The early stages of his incursion are obscure since they are documented only in the concise account of al-Ṭabarī, but it seems that, as George Huxley argued, ʿAmr fought Michael III to a bloody stalemate at Marj al-Usquf (Bishop's Meadow) in Kappadokia, before advancing towards Amisos once more.[61] Both Genesios and the Continuator embellish the campaign and the culminating battle of Lalakaon/Poson with classical allusions, symbolic imagery and, in the Continuator's case, prophetic overtones that foreshadow Petronas' death a few years later. All of this testifies to the importance with which contemporaries invested the battle, since it seems certain that our two accounts originally derived from a common source. According to

59 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:14, pp. 65–66. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 82–83; Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:24, pp. 252–255.

60 al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 34, p. 167.

61 al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 35, trans. George Saliba (Albany, 1985), p. 9; George L. Huxley, "The Emperor Michael III and the Battle of Bishop's Meadow (A.D. 863)," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 16:4 (1975), pp. 443–450.

this narrative, ʿAmr was surrounded by an ambitious encircling manoeuvre on the part of the thematic armies and perished in a futile attempt to break free, whereas his son, who escaped for a time, was captured.[62] Few of the emir's forces survived the battle. Whether Karbeas was among the slain is unclear since he never features in the Byzantine accounts. His death in the same year of the battle is only documented by al-Masʿūdī, who does not give any further specifics.[63] It is entirely possible that his death had no connection with military affairs and, even if he did die in battle, it is equally likely that he died at Marj al-Usquf as at Lalakaon.[64] 863 did, however, mark the nadir of Islamic fortunes in Asia Minor, since ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Armanī, who had been raised to be Ostikan of Armīniya in the meantime, too fell to Petronas' forces. Once the latter had defeated ʿAmr he marched into Islamic territory while ʿAlī, who was at Martyropolis (Mayyāfāriqīn) at the time, rushed to intercept him. The two met at Halōras, where ʿAlī was defeated and slain. According to al-Ṭabarī, the deaths of ʿAmr and ʿAlī, as well as the prevailing tyranny of the Turkish troops at Sāmarrā, led to outbreaks of rioting in Baghdād, where the populace raged at the central institutions they believed had failed the much-lauded defenders of the frontier and the recently murdered caliph al-Mutawakkil.[65] Al-Masʿūdī, meanwhile, offers an insight on how ʿAmr, ʿAlī, and Karbeas were feared in Byzantine lands, listing all three prominently in a list of figures whom the Romans so respected that they supposedly hung their portraits in a church.[66] Listed alongside them is one Chrysocheir, who would become a notorious foe of the empire in the years to come.

62 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:15, pp. 67–69. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 83–86; Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:25, pp. 254–263. The *De ceremoniis* contains a description of a victory chant over an emir which derives from this occasion, although unsurprisingly no mention is made of the reigning emperor Michael III. See Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *The Book of Ceremonies. Constantine Porphyrogennetos*, 69, ed. and trans. Anne Moffatt, Maxeme Tall, 2 vols, vol. 1 (Canberra, 2012), pp. 332–333; Albert Vogt, *Le livre des cérémonies: commentaire,* 2 vols, vol. 2 (Paris, 1940), pp. 145–146.

63 al-Masʿūdī, *Les prairies d'or*, vol. 8, p. 75. Translation: *Masudi: The Meadows of Gold*, p. 319.

64 Lemerle favours the interpretation that Karbeas died peacefully, but this is just as conjectural as the contrary view. Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 95–96. For what it is worth, Pseudo-Photios claims he died of disease. Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 150, pp. 172–173.

65 al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 35, pp. 9–11.

66 al-Masʿūdī, *Les prairies d'or*, vol. 8, p. 75. Translation: *Masudi: The Meadows of Gold*, p. 319. Our extant version of the text erroneously describes Chrysocheir as the sister of Karbeas.

3 An Emperor in the East?: Basil, Chrysocheir, and the Road to War

The early years of the 860s, then, marked a highpoint of Byzantine influence along the eastern frontier. It was in this climate that the patriarch Photios renewed attempts to unite the Byzantine and Armenian churches, which eventually led to compromises on practical matters at the Council of Širakawan in 862, although little headway seems to have been made regarding union itself.[67] In one letter from this correspondence, Photios perhaps refers to joint initiatives of the Armenian and Byzantine churches against the Paulicians, but the heretics in question are not named, so the prospect remains uncertain.[68] A somewhat more certain reference to Paulicians lies in Photios' encyclical letter of 867, which alludes to the conversion of heretics in Constantinople who, it is implied, did not previously consider the heavenly Father to be the demiurge.[69] Returning to events in the east, it seems that the Paulicians and their Islamic allies took time to regroup after the events of 863. We do not find any reference to Chrysocheir in our histories during the rest of Michael III's reign. A sole window perhaps remains on their activity during this time, but it is not a straightforward one. Several of Photios' letters are addressed to a *spatharios* John and a *spatharios* John Chrysocheir who seem to be one and the same.[70] That this John Chrysocheir is identical to the figure who succeeded Karbeas seems reasonably secure, but not established beyond all doubt, since the Paulician leader's forename is not given in any other source. As a result, Lemerle has argued that this John Chrysocheir is actually the father of our Chrysocheir, largely because Genesios writes that the latter's (unnamed) father also raided the empire.[71] I am not inclined to place too much trust by this reference because Genesios seems to confuse Kallistos, who is an opponent of the Paulicians in version *Γ* of the *42 Martyrs*, with a Paulician leader in the same passage.[72] In fact, the historian's knowledge of the Paulicians seems suspect in

67 Igor Dorfmann-Lazarev, *Arméniens et Byzantins à l'époque de Photius: deux dèbats théologiques après le triomphe de l'orthodoxie* (Leuven, 2004); Tim W. Greenwood, "Failure of a Mission? Photius and the Armenian Church," *Le Muséon* 119 (2006), pp. 123–167.

68 Photios, *Epistulae*, in *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, *Ep.* 285, eds. Basil Laourdas, Leendert G. Westerink, 6. vols, vol. 3 (Leipzig, 1985), pp. 100–101, l. 72–82; Carl Dixon, "Heresy, Hostility and a Paradise in Full Bloom: Contextualising Photios' Letter to the Armenians," *Byzantion* 89 (2019), pp. 226–227.

69 Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 2, vol. 1, p. 41, ll. 27–30. Note the concerns about the letter's authenticity. See Chapter 2 note 27 above.

70 The letters in question are *Ep*. 33–40, 57, 80, and 134.

71 Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 41–42; Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:35, p. 86. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. 107.

72 Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 87, n. 8.

several places.[73] It therefore seems likely that this John Chrysocheir is the same figure who later vexed Basil I so sorely. The correspondent's portrayal certainly seems fitting to a Paulician leader, since, although Photios had serious misgivings as to both his orthodoxy and loyalty, he was evidently a figure of some stature, who received further imperial titles despite his obstinance.

For all of this though, Photios's letters do not enrich our understanding markedly. Most of them are extremely brief and doctrinal in nature; a fact which later led them to be incorporated within the patriarch's didactic compilation, the *Amphilochia*.[74] Photios' admonishing tone does not suggest a relationship of any depth between the two men and by the standards of Byzantine epistolography the correspondence is an impersonal one. This makes the dating and sequencing of the letters somewhat difficult, besides the presumptive limits of Chrysocheir's assumption of power and death (863–872). I would be inclined to place most of the letters within Photios' first patriarchate, but it seems that the correspondence may have continued in exile afterwards, since in *Ep.* 80 our author refers to his suffering, which may be an allusion to captivity.[75] On balance, it is best to employ circumspection here. The fullest of the letters hails Photios' correspondent as John, *protospatharios* and *protonotarios of the dromos*, which evidently marks a promotion from the rank he is assigned elsewhere and is thereby most intuitively placed as one of the later letters, but its neutral tone sits uneasily with this.[76] While these ambiguities preclude a definitive reconstruction, a general trend of events seems clear enough. Attempts were made to draw Chrysocheir and the Paulicians more generally into the imperial orbit after the events of 863 and, while some progress was made to this end officially, distrust and hostility remained under the surface.

By far the most interesting characteristic of the correspondence is the way in which Photios characterises Chrysocheir's heterodoxy. Four of his short missives are Christological in nature, representing error through figures such as Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, Eutyches, and Nestorios among others, although the patriarch's formulation is generic and never seeks to determine where Chrysocheir falls on this spectrum, even though he discusses error in relation

73 See his reference to Montanos as an inspiration for Paulician belief and his dating of the fall of Tephrikē prior to Chrysocheir's death. Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:34–35, pp. 85–86. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 106–107.

74 On the *Amphilochia*, see Photios, *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, eds. Basil Laourdas, Leendert G. Westerink, 6. vols, vol. 4–5 (Leipzig, 1986). For the relationship with the letters, see Laourdas, Westerink, eds., Photios, *Epistulae*, vol. 1, pp. ix–xi.

75 Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 80, vol. 1, p. 121.

76 Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 134, vol. 1, p. 176.

to natures, persons, energies, and wills.[77] Another three similarly brief notes deal with the heresy of iconoclasm, whereas the sole letter of any great length is also devoted to this topic.[78] While the relevance of the Christological material is unclear, in this case there is a clear implication that Chrysocheir is an iconoclast himself; a very significant point, since this is the first direct link between the Paulicians and iconoclasm in our sources. Curiously, dualism is entirely absent from the correspondence. The traditional Paulician inspirators Mani and Paul of Samosata barely merit a mention and, when they do, they are invoked for their supposed influence on later Christological errors.[79] In the longest of the letters, Photios discusses the Mosaic prohibition of idols, whose origin in the Old Testament would render it unsuitable to a conventionally dualist audience.[80] As a result, Photios' correspondence stands apart from earlier understandings of Paulician doctrine.

The reasons for this departure are difficult to fathom, since the genuinely Photian sermons which follow the *Brief History* attest the patriarch's contemporary interest in dualism, as does his reference to Paulicians in the encyclical of 867. A number of theories present themselves: perhaps the correspondent is not our Paulician leader after all; perhaps Photios was not familiar with his correspondent's beliefs; perhaps Paulician belief on the Anti-Taurus underwent significant changes; or, alternatively, the correspondence may reflect developments in Byzantine conceptions of Paulician religiosity. I have emphasised throughout the possible disconnect between the eras of the *didaskaloi* and the later military leaders and it may be that the latter drew significant support from iconoclasts, whether as defectors from the Byzantine army or elsewhere. Alternatively, it is possible that iconodule propaganda sought to conflate Paulicians and iconoclasts more closely after the former turned against the empire. Similar tendencies are apparent to a lesser degree in the early years of the century, when Theophanes frequently associates iconoclasts with Paulicians, Athinganoi, and other heretics, but his link does not seem to have gained wider currency, since if Paulicians and iconoclasts were really so interlinked in the popular imagination, it seems unthinkable that Leo V would persecute the former upon the restoration of iconoclasm. The association of iconoclasts and Paulicians did, however, develop further during the second half of the 9th century, as attested by the representation of Constantine V as a

77 Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 33–36, vol. 1, pp. 86–87.

78 Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 37–39, vol. 1, pp. 87–88; Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 134, vol. 1, pp. 176–178.

79 Surprisingly, in *Ep*. 34 they are considered to reflect opposite Christological tendencies. Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 34, vol. 1, p. 86.

80 Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep*. 134, vol. 1, pp. 176–177, l. 20–29.

Paulician within the second recension of George the Monk's *Chronicon* and the uncertain nature of Lizix's heresy, which was portrayed as iconoclastic in some contexts and as Manichaean in others. In the previous chapter, I remarked the possibility that associating Paulicians with iconoclasts or other ill-regarded strata of Byzantine society might give authorities the opportunity to impose more severe punishments on these actors or otherwise clamp down on their activity. Such a reading is doubtful in the case of the 810s, but is rather more difficult to rule out from the 840s onward, not only because of the increasing convergence in rhetoric about iconoclasts and Paulicians, but also due to the fact that some facets of Paulician activity stem from agents who had beforehand been considered Romans, as in the case of Karbeas' defection from the Anatolikon army and, somewhat more conjecturally, those who abandoned Theoktistos' army at Mauropotamos. It must, however, be acknowledged that this possibility does not seem to underlie Photios' correspondence with Chrysocheir, which is rather less polemical than much of the material we have seen thus far. Consequently, it is an open question whether Photios' letters indicate a convergence of iconoclast and Paulician ideas, a convergence of rhetoric about them, or merely reflect his own theological anxieties. Given the ambiguities of the correspondence and the lack of familiarity between the two men, it is unwise to commit to any conclusion, but it is nonetheless noteworthy that the question of images was belatedly becoming entwined with ideas of Paulician heterodoxy.

Thankfully, the diplomatic context of the letters is a little clearer than their religious particulars, since Chrysocheir is portrayed as a duplicitous figure, whose loyalty to Photios or, more probably, the empire in general is decidedly suspect. This is implicit in many of the letters we have already encountered, but it is also specifically addressed in three other epistles, the first of which (*Ep.* 40) criticizes him for not heeding Photios' attempts at correction.[81] The other two (*Ep.* 57 and 80), by contrast, are the only letters which are addressed to John the *spatharios*, with the cognomen Chrysocheir absent. Yet it seems that these refer to the same individual noted above, since they maintain the damning portrayal expressed therein and even go beyond it. Here, Photios' ambivalence and exasperation arise not from Chrysocheir's presumed heterodoxy, but his conduct; in one notable instance, the patriarch goes as far as characterising him as a snake in human form.[82] Both letters position Chrysocheir outside accepted Roman norms, with the implication that he is an enemy in all but

81 Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep.* 40, vol. 1, pp. 88–89; *Ep.* 57, vol. 1, p. 104; *Ep.* 80, vol. 1, p. 121.

82 Photios, *Epistulae*, *Ep.* 80, vol. 1, p. 121, l. 2–3.

name. Extrapolating from data which is ambiguous as this has it risks, but it seems that after a period of nominal reconciliation with the empire following the demise of Karbeas and ʿAmr, Chrysocheir began to advance an assertive policy once more. Since the bulk of Photios' letters probably date to Michael III's reign, his flirtation with the empire was brief and conflict was overt once more by the accession of Basil. The crucial question here is whether Chrysocheir broke definitively with the empire during the latter years of Michael's rule. Our chroniclers are silent about Paulician raiding while Michael still lived, but this is because after their account of ʿAmr's campaigns they display no interest in events in the east and instead focus on blackening Michael's name. As a result, our sources never convincingly explain why Chrysocheir became such an inveterate enemy of the empire. They instead preoccupy themselves with the power struggles which engulfed Michael, his uncle Bardas, who had been elevated to *caesar* in 862, and the future Basil I, who was successively promoted to *caesar* and co-emperor in the aftermath of Bardas' demise. Genesios and the Continuator identify Michael as the mastermind of his uncle's assassination and the Continuator implicates Basil in the deed itself, but both are keen to obfuscate Basil's part in Michael's murder and instead lay the lion's share of the blame upon the imperial chamberlains.[83]

This sanguine jostling in the palace may at first seem of peripheral concern to events in the empire's eastern borderlands, but it may be more closely intertwined with Chrysocheir's later actions than conventional wisdom acknowledges. There is a definite suspicion in our sources that Chrysocheir posed an ideological threat to Basil: he is portrayed as the empire's greatest contemporary enemy and provoked the emperor's rancour unlike any other figure. This enmity receives its clearest expression in the *Vita Basilii*, where Basil pleads before God that he might not meet his end before firing three arrows into Chrysocheir's head; an oath which is later fulfilled on its severed hulk:

> For all that, he would enter the holy church of God every day without fail, and beseech the Lord – in this he put forward as his mediators before God

83 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:17–28, pp. 69–80. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 86–99; Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:30–44, pp. 274–299. In the *Vita Basilii*, Basil emboldens Bardas' killers to commit the deed after Michael pleads with him to strengthen their shaking resolve. See Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 17, pp. 62–71. Symeon describes Basil's conspiracy more fully, whereas al-Ṭabarī blames Basil for Michael's murder in passing. See Symeon the Logothete, *Chronicon*, 132:46–54, pp. 255–259; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 36, trans. David Waines (Albany, 1992), p. 165.

> both the Archangel Michael and the Prophet Elijah – that he should not depart this life before witnessing the downfall of Chrysocheir and fixing three arrows into that man's foul head. Which thing later came to pass …[84]
>
> When the head was brought to him, he recalled his prayers; in tears he turned his mind's eye to Him that fulfils the desires of those who call upon Him, and ordered that a bow and arrows be brought; quickly drawing the bowstring and facing backward, he discharged three arrows at the murderous head; nor did he miss a single shot. He thought that he had made this offering, so amply deserved by that miscreant, to God as a kind of sacrifice to the dead, on behalf of the countless multitudes whom Chrysocheir had destroyed in the many years of his rule.[85]

These passages, which bookend the account of Chrysocheir's death, mythologise his end to a degree that is rare even for the empire's greatest enemies in our period. Although Genesios does not employ the same motif, he too invests Basil's war against the Paulicians with religious importance, focusing on Tephrikē in particular. In his version of events, after returning from a failed attempt on Chrysocheir's citadel, a tearful Basil enters the Church of the Archangels in Constantinople and begs them that he might not die before destroying the fortress, which is shortly thereafter reduced to ruins during a storm in an act of divine retribution.[86] It goes without saying that most aspects of this account are deeply suspect from a historical perspective, but it is notable that Chrysocheir's demise marks the climax of the *Basileion*, which ceases after Genesios describes Basil's personality traits, skills, and the circumstances of his death.[87] Once again, this observation suggests that the conflict with Chrysocheir was crucial to conceptions of Basil's reign. At the height of the conflict between the two, Genesios has Chrysocheir contemptuously ask Basil to cede the eastern provinces of the empire to him after the emperor's peace proposal in the wake of Paulician attacks on Nikaea, Nikomedia,

84 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 41, pp. 148–149.

85 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 43, pp. 156–159.

86 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:34, p. 85. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 106–107.

87 It is not only the account of Tephrikē's fall that is unconvincing. Kaldellis notes that the Church of the Archangels was not built until 880, after the Paulicians' downfall, so even the religious motif is historically inaccurate. See Kaldellis, ed., *Genesios. On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. 106, n. 481. For the final passages of the *Basileion*, see Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:38–42, pp. 88–91. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 110–113.

and Ephesos.[88] The proposed settlement, which would effectively make Chrysocheir an emperor himself, has received surprisingly little attention, but it is worth taking seriously due to his prominence at the time and the ire he provoked in Basil. Photios' letters indicate that his loyalty to the empire had been shaky for some time, but there is scant evidence that he broke definitively while Michael still ruled.[89] His raiding campaign only seems to have begun in earnest during the reign of Basil. A tantalising explanation for this immediately presents itself: might Chrysocheir have turned against this murderous usurper on the occasion of the senior emperor's assassination?[90]

Naturally, given the centrality of Basil to later historiography which extolled the dynasty he inaugurated, an emphasis of this kind is lacking in our sources, but it would explain both the virulence of Basil's loathing and the territorial demands noted by Genesios. The terms in which these are framed admittedly do not imply a zeal to avenge Michael:

> If you wish to make peace with me, O Emperor, renounce your eastern possessions and content yourselves with the western ones. Then I will make peace with you. Otherwise we will exert all our energy to destroy you and your Empire.[91]

If, then, Chrysocheir did break with the empire around the time of Michael's death, it was almost certainly a pretext to further his own designs and probably owed much to popular opposition to Basil. Most probably, he simply sought to exploit the prevailing confusion and Basil's perceived weakness as a military commander; a reputation which the new emperor never really shook off.[92]

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88 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:35, p. 86. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 107–108.

89 The reference to Leo Argyros' campaigns against Tephrikē in Michael's reign imply conflict of some kind, but because these cannot be dated securely it is unclear whether they refer to the period of Chrysocheir's rule. See Theophanes Continuatus VI, 27, p. 374, l. 11–19.

90 Tobias posits something akin to this, noting that Chrysocheir's early raids against Nikaea, Nikomedia, and the Thrakesion might be motivated by an attempt to rally dissidents to his banner, whether these were partisans of the Paganes noted below, and/or those loyal to the memory of Michael III. See Norman Tobias, *Basil I: Founder of the Macedonian Dynasty* (Lewiston, 2007), p. 102.

91 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:35, p. 86, l. 80–83. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. 107.

92 This is implicitly acknowledged by the *Vita Basilii* on a number of occasions, since the text glosses over his idleness during the Melitene campaign of 873 and notes his annoyance when victories were achieved by his subordinates and not himself. See Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 39; 46, pp. 142–143; 162–165.

Opposition to Basil rarely manifests itself in our sources, but there are outliers. His promotion to co-emperor so alienated the logothete Symbatios, who had conspired alongside Basil and Michael in the murder of Bardas, that he rebelled in league with Paganes, the general of the Opsikion thema. Significantly, both rebelled in Michael III's name to make clear that their opposition was to Basil alone.[93] In a similar vein, shortly before Michael's death attempts were made on Basil's life when his position as favourite was usurped by Basilikinos.[94] His popularity was therefore not universal before Michael's death and the murder of the senior emperor would hardly have helped matters. Quite how all of this conditions the confrontation between Basil and Chrysocheir remains unclear because events in the east are so little understood in the latter years of Michael III's reign, but it at least seems clear that the Paulician leader posed a greater challenge to Basil's fledgling regime than has previously been recognized. At first this was probably a consequence of Basil's struggle for legitimation rather than any grand ambitions on Chrysocheir's part, but matters may have changed as the latter's raids became more ambitious and successful. His motivations are never adequately expressed by our sources, but they may partially reflect a westward shift in the Paulicians' centre of gravity caused by their compromised position on the eastern frontier. In the years since 863, the Islamic-Paulician alliance had effectively fallen into abeyance, undermining the economic conditions and strategic balance that Karbeas had exploited so well.

Aside from a single text, to which we shall soon turn, there is no direct reference to a break between Paulicians and Muslims, but the diplomatic context of our sources implies a weakening of relations around this time. Chrysocheir's career, for instance, sees much less evidence of Islamic cooperation compared to Karbeas, despite the confusing fact that Tephrikē is often identified as an Islamic settlement under his rule. While Karbeas frequently fought alongside his Muslim allies, our sources never place his successor in the same position. Both Genesios and the *Vita Basilii* relate Chrysocheir campaigning alone and their Arabic equivalents do not mention any relationship with the frontier emirates. Al-Masʿūdī and al-Ṭabarī mention him only in passing: the former while describing the old Paulician heartlands and the latter on the occasion of his death.[95] He certainly seems to have enjoyed greater independence than

93 Note, however, that Basil recalled them to court after Michael's death. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 18–19, pp. 70–79. For Basil's struggle for legitimacy, see also McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 152–154.

94 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 24–27, pp. 90–109.

95 al-Masʿūdī, *Le livre de l'avertissement*, p. 248; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 36, p. 142.

his predecessor and the best explanation for this is that the frontier emirates fell into a malaise after the twin routs of Lalakaon and Halōras.[96] As noted above, central support for the emirates was impotent in the final years of ʻAmr al-Aqṭaʻ and ʻAlī al-Armanī and matters deteriorated further as the caliphate slipped into the period of turbulence commonly known as the anarchy at Sāmarrā. In fact, their weakness is such that we do not know for certain the successor of ʻAmr as emir of Melitene, since although one of his surviving sons, Abū ʻAbdallāh b. ʻAmr, came to prominence, he did so as Emir of Anazarbus.[97] The decline of Islamic power in the area therefore seems to have been the predominant cause which determined the Paulicians' newfound autonomy, but our sources are not unanimous on the point. Peter of Sicily, an admittedly unreliable witness, implies that the most important factor was the Paulicians' reorientation from Argaous to Tephrikē, noting that they settled at the latter to "escape the tyranny of the Agarenes of Melitene."[98] This seems unlikely if Islamic support was as crucial as I have argued, but he is at least correct that this support diminished over time.

We therefore possess many indications which suggest that the Paulician-Islamic alliance foundered around this time, but only one source explicitly alludes to the break. While writing of the value of the Paulicians (Arabic: Baylaḳāni) as Muslim allies in his *Kitāb al-kharāj wa-ṣināʻat al-kitāba* (*Book of the Land-Tax and the Craft of Writing*), Qudāma b. Jaʻfar notes that they migrated away from their power base after ill-treatment at the hands of the frontier emirates, although unfortunately he gives no chronological specifics:[99]

> … the land which was settled by a people called the Baylaḳāni, who are of the Romans, except for certain differences that exist between the two in matters of faith. These people used to give aid to the Muslims during their raids, and their aid was greatly valued by the Muslims. All at once, however, they migrated away from this land, in consequence of the evil conduct of the governors of the frontier who had dealings with them, and

96 Whittow notes that Melitene never really recovered from the death of ʻAmr. See Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium*, p. 311.

97 Note, however, that the *Vita Basilii* places him around Melitene during Basil's campaign of 878/79 against Germanikeia and Adata. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 46, pp. 164–167.

98 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 184, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 91.

99 Al-Masʻūdī also notes their return to Roman territories by his day, thereby implying he too considers them Roman. al-Masʻūdī, *Les prairies d'or*, vol. 8, p. 75. Translation: *Masudi: The Meadows of Gold*, p. 319.

> of the little honour that they received at the hands of those appointed to look after their affairs. Hence the Baylaḳāni have come to be dispersed abroad through various countries, while in their place, now, the Armenians have settled.[100]

Qudāma's account does not entirely convince, since he has conflated the waning of the Islamic alliance and the dispersal of the Paulicians from the Anti-Taurus into a single event, whereas the latter was by all accounts a later development impelled by the aggression of Basil and his subordinates. For this reason, we should not necessarily endorse his claims about a change of policy by the frontier emirates, particularly given the lack of corroborating evidence. Qudāma certainly places a high value on the Paulicians as Muslim allies and this may have made him unduly harsh on the neighbouring emirs. It seems most likely that the waning of the alliance was not cause by hostility on the governors' part, but rather a reluctance or inability to render sufficient aid to an ally, particularly given the enfeebled state of the emirates at the time. In this scenario, it is readily comprehensible that Chrysocheir acquiesced to Roman overtures, accepting the support and titles which Photios' letters attest.

At first, it seems that Chrysocheir was a relatively quiescent client, but, whether as a result of Michael III's death or other factors, he soon took the offensive in a series of raids that were every bit as ferocious as those of 'Amr a decade beforehand. These exploits initially seem to stem from a position of strength, but they may in fact reflect weakness if his hands were tied by the lack of economic and military assistance from 863 onwards. In earlier years, the Paulicians were dependent on raiding to sustain their income and this tendency undoubtedly increased as external support evaporated. The economic fundamentals of the Paulician lands are admittedly poorly understood, but Karbeas' subservient relationship with 'Amr implies that their revenue had been shaky even when Islamic support was forthcoming. Even if the no-man's land was not as desolate as scholarship has traditionally supposed,

100 Qudāma b. Ja'far, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa-ṣinā' at al-kitāba*, partial translation in *Bibliotheca geographorum Arabicorum*, vol. 6, ed. and trans. Michael Jan de Goeje (Leiden, 1870), p. 194. The translation used here is based on Le Strange, with emendations from de Goeje's edition. De Goeje initially believed that Baylaḳāni should be amended to Naylaḳāni/Nayḳalāni (i.e. Nicolaitans), but later accepted the Baylaḳāni reading, as Le Strange notes. See Guy Le Strange, "Al-Abrīk, Tephrikē, the Capital of the Paulicians," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1896), p. 736. The Nicolaitan reading is retained by Heck, whose work provides valuable context on Qudāma and the *Kitāb al-kharāj*. See Paul L. Heck, *The Construction of Knowledge in Islamic Civilization: Qudāma b. Ja'far and his Kitāb al-Kharāj wa-ṣinā'at al-kitāba* (Leiden/Boston, 2002), p. 131.

the area had still supported little developed infrastructure for centuries. It is likely that the natural environment was exploited wherever possible, but the martial core who followed Karbeas and Chrysocheir were best suited to other talents. Although separated from the frontier emirates by the mountains and their faith, the fledgling Paulician centres had developed under Islamic auspices and adopted many of the same military tactics. In such a setting, it is natural that raiding was their most lucrative source of income, as is apparent from the number of outlets that it took. Al-Ṭabarī's account of 'Amr's 861 campaign shows that both he and Karbeas seized wealth in the form of livestock, while in Chrysocheir's time the Paulicians would enrich themselves by plundering the cities of Asia Minor. In addition to these methods, the practice of taking prisoners could also be fruitful. The example of Poullades, whom we shall soon encounter as the slayer of Chrysocheir, suggests that prisoners were well treated in order to secure a hefty ransom. As a result, it seems that the martial activities of the Paulicians evolved in specialised ways for the purposes of maximising their income. This policy met with few problems when Islamic forces were on the offensive during Karbeas' leadership, but when the strategic balance shifted to favour the empire, Chrysocheir was faced with a more troubling predicament.

4 The Last Raids of Chrysocheir and the Eclipse of Tephrikē

His eventual solution was to take the fight to the empire itself, but, as has become standard thus far, establishing a workable chronology of his campaigns is not entirely straightforward.[101] Genesios, who gives the fullest account of the breadth of Chrysocheir's incursions, notes that he targeted Nikomedia, Nikaea, and the Thrakesion thema, with Ephesos suffering particularly within the latter.[102] However, he does not give sufficient detail to determine whether this corresponds to a single campaign, or to several. The chronology is also imprecise, although a date between 867–870 at least seems secure.[103] For Genesios,

101 Most useful here is Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 96–108. See also Tobias, *Basil I*, pp. 95–123; 134–137, whose appraisal of Basil's strategic vision owes much to hindsight.

102 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:35, p. 86. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 107–108.

103 The mission of Peter of Sicily to Tephrikē has often been used to narrow these dates, but, given our conclusions on the authenticity of this source, it is of no use to us here. The *Vita Basilii* does not describe any of these attacks, whereas Genesios' summary of the wars against the Paulicians, which precedes his account of Chrysocheir's raids, is singularly unreliable. It at least seems apparent that these events predate Basil's 871 campaign. See

one outrage could not be passed over in silence: while sacking Ephesos, Chrysocheir's troops profaned the Church of John by bringing their horses and baggage inside.[104] This episode, which has a more truthful ring than many allegations against the Paulicians, seems a rare window into the religious differences which separated them and the Romans, although unfortunately Genesios does not elaborate on the incident. It was in the aftermath of this assault that Chrysocheir disdainfully rejected Basil's peace terms and demanded the cession of the eastern provinces, which presumably amounts to Asia Minor in its entirety. This is a rather unusual demand which deserves some consideration. It implies that Chrysocheir did not straightforwardly conceive of the area in either Byzantine or Islamic terms, since possession of Constantinople remained imperative to the former and the latter had shied away from even the most limited territorial designs beyond the *thughūr* from al-Mu'taṣim's reign onward. His demands ring true to a different perspective, which presumably drew from some combination of his Paulician background, his life on the frontier, and a pragmatic assessment of how far his power might reasonably extend. Of course, it is also possible that he trumped up his demands excessively if he had no intention of negotiating with Basil, but even in this case the choice of terms is still revealing. Chrysocheir sought to creatively explore the opportunities that the late 860s afforded, even to the extent of redrawing the political map outside the centuries-old framework of Byzantine-Islamic warfare. How closely his designs were entangled with the impotence of the frontier emirates, the fallout from Michael III's death, and any resistance Basil I faced as a result remains unclear, but his ambitions proved ephemeral in any case.

Once Chrysocheir made his demands known, Basil saw little choice but to counterattack. In 871 he took the fight to Tephrikē itself, although, once more, our sources fail to agree on the general course of events. According to Symeon the Logothete, Basil's attack on the citadel was a resounding failure and he was only saved from death by the actions of Theophylaktos Abastaktos, whose son would rise to the purple half a century later as Romanos I Lekapenos.[105] Following the defeat, Basil returned to the capital and ventured nothing further. In contrast to Symeon's brief account, the *Vita Basilii* gives a wealth of detail, describing Basil ravaging the countryside around Tephrikē, but

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Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 37, pp. 136–139; Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:34, p. 85, l. 47–66. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 106–107.

104 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:35, p. 86, l. 70–72 Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 107–108.

105 Symeon the Logothete, *Chronicon*, 132:7, p. 262, l. 44–49.

ultimately deeming the fortress itself unassailable. Thereupon he crossed into Islamic territory and sent a secondary force against Sozopetra and Samosata, only advancing upon Melitene when this detachment had returned. He defeated a Muslim army outside the city, but again lacked the strength for a sustained siege, so he returned to sack "the country of the Manichees" before returning to Constantinople and celebrating a triumph.[106] The geography of the two accounts is not necessarily unreconcilable, but their assessment of the campaign's success is widely divergent. As a result, Lemerle has dated the offensive related by the *Vita Basilii* to 873 in order to coincide with al-Ṭabarī's reference to a campaign of Basil against Samosata and Melitene in that year.[107] According to this account: "The Byzantine emperor conquered Sumaysāṭ in this year and also attacked Malaṭyah and besieged its inhabitants, who fought back and succeeded in driving him off."[108]

Even though the *Vita*'s account, whose detail inspires confidence, clearly places the campaign a year before Chrysocheir's death, it seems that Lemerle has hit the nail on the head by arguing that it actually refers to the events of 873. Most convincingly, both the *Vita* and al-Ṭabarī specify that Samosata was targeted before Melitene, which is not the intuitive campaign itinerary. It also seems inconceivable that Basil could have celebrated a triumph in 871 while his nemesis Chrysocheir still threatened the empire. Leaving the matter of dating aside, the campaign recounted in the *Vita* demonstrates that the presence of Tephrikē still complicated the empire's ability to wage war in the east, since Basil's inactivity before advancing on Melitene is best explained by his reluctance to penetrate deep into Muslim lands while both Tephrikē and Melitene remained in a position to resist. In fact, the military endeavours of Basil's reign would consistently target this area rather than the Kilikian front to the southwest, thereby suggesting that Tephrikē and Melitene were still considered the greater strategic threat despite their diminished influence.

In addition to its value for understanding military events, the *Vita*'s account is by far our best source for understanding the ethno-cultural composition of the lands under Chrysocheir's dominion. We have already seen that Byzantine historians often characterised Tephrikē as an Islamic settlement and the *Vita*'s

106 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 37–40, pp. 136–149; McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 152–157.

107 Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 100–102; 104–105. See also Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium*, p. 417, n. 6. The 873 campaign is also narrated, albeit in very brief terms, by Genesios. Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:31, pp. 81–82. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 101–102.

108 al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 36, p. 156.

description further nuances this by sketching an area that was far from homogeneously Paulician in character. This is most notable in the reaction of the surrounding lands to Basil's attempt on Tephrikē, which is punctuated by several lacunae:

> When the other city of the Ishmaelites which they call Taranta, saw the *** and the great slaughter of those in Tephrike, it sent ambassadors to sue for peace and to request that it be enlisted among the cities allied with the emperor. The most excellent emperor showed as much magnanimity *** as he *** toward anyone who resisted him; he yielded to the embassy, granted peace to those who requested it, and from that time on had allies instead of enemies. As a result, not a few others sought refuge with him, particularly a certain Kourtikios, an Armenian who at the time held Lokana and was relentlessly ravaging Roman borderlands. Kourtikios put his city, troops, and people under the sway of the emperor, admiring his magnanimity blended with courage and his justice combined with strength.[109]

In considering both Taranta and Tephrikē as "cities of Ishmaelites," the *Vita* continues the tendency we have traced thus far of conflating Paulician and Muslim identities. The Muslim identification does not fit in Taranta's case, since it had been abandoned in the reign of Umar II (717–720) and there is no record of a subsequent resettlement.[110] Like most other sites west of Melitene, it seems to have been under nominal Paulician control. Perhaps the most notable aspect of Taranta's submission is the site's location, since while Tephrikē was at the extreme northern limit of Paulician power, Taranta lay close to its southern extremity. The same seems to be true of Lokana, where the Armenian bandit Kourtikios, or K'urdik, also submitted his city to the emperor.[111] At first glance, it seems that neither settlement was in immediate danger after the attack on Tephrikē, which had not been successful in any case, but subsequent

109 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 38, pp. 140–141.

110 al-Balādhurī, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, ed. and trans. Philip K. Hitti, Francis C. Murgotten, 2 vols, vol. 1 (New York/London, 1916), p. 290; Paul Wheatley, *The Places Where Men Pray Together: Cities in Islamic Lands: Seventh through the Tenth Centuries* (Chicago, 2001), p. 407, n. 48.

111 John G.C. Anderson, "The Road-System of Eastern Asia Minor," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 17 (1897), p. 24. On Kourtikios, see also Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium*, p. 315.

events show that Basil marched through the area on his route to Melitene, so the defections are in fact eminently understandable.

Even if Chrysocheir were dead by this time, Paulician control over the area was evidently weak if its inhabitants could capitulate without a fight. Whether Kourtikios could be considered Paulician in the same way as the inhabitants of Taranta or Tephrikē is unclear, but his circumstances may reflect something of the political gravity of the area. As noted in Chapter 2, it is something of an oddity that Paulician or Manichaean identities are so rarely invoked in this period, with Genesios and the *Vita Basilii* conceptualising opposition largely through the twin poles of Chrysocheir and Tephrikē. This combination of leader and powerbase nevertheless coheres with the passage quoted above, where authority is demarcated on a settlement by settlement basis. Fortified sites comprised the bedrock of the region: at the culmination of Basil's campaign the *Vita* describes his attack on the Paulician lands, including his razing of Argaous, the otherwise unknown Rachat, and the forts of Koutakios and Stephen.[112] The naming of the latter two in particular implies that the power of individual warlords was focused on particular sites; a fact which is also evident in references which pair Chrysocheir and Tephrikē, as well as some of the Muslim forts taken by Basil, notably the forts of Kourtikios and Amer.[113]

In short, the patchwork of political authority which arises from the *Vita*'s portrayal implies a much more fragmented polity than anything that could be considered a Paulician state. Political integration seems to have been rudimentary in the extreme and the mere presence of the emperor and his army was enough to reconfigure the diplomatic landscape. Our sources consistently employ a range of identity-language, be it Ishmaelite, Manichaean, Armenian, or otherwise, across the area, to the extent that terming it Paulician may be in itself a simplification. Of course, a background of realigning loyalties is eminently understandable if Lemerle is correct that the campaign occurred after Chrysocheir's death, but, whatever the circumstances, the dynamics of the area are most easily reconcilable with what we have seen of the shatter zone, that is, an essentially non-state space where political ties were fleeting and unpredictable.[114] When regional conditions were propitious, leaders such as Karbeas and Chrysocheir might have enjoyed ascendancy for a time, but authority fragmented swiftly in the case of outside intervention, leaving

112 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 49, pp. 176–177.

113 Whether these sites are named for 'Amr al-Aqṭa' or the Kourtikios mentioned above is unknown. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 40, pp. 144–147.

114 James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland South East Asia* (New Haven/London, 2009), pp. 7–9.

strongmen and settlements scrambling to fend for themselves. The main point of commonality seems to be in subsistence strategies since Kourtikios' raiding is very much in the same vein as Paulician norms. The overriding impression is that the geopolitical niche and its associated forms of social organisation and subsistence patterns did more to mould the area than Paulician heterodoxy, although caution must be sounded here, since the latter is almost invisible in our sources for this period.

The transience of political authority is best demonstrated by the sharp decline of Paulician power following Chrysocheir's death. In marked contrast to the silence which covers Karbeas' demise, both Genesios and the *Vita Basilii* give a lengthy, parallel account of his successor's fate that assuredly derives from a common source.[115] Basil's failed attack on Tephrikē in 871 had obviously not stymied Chrysocheir's ambitions and in the following year he penetrated the heart of Anatolia, striking as far as Ankyra and the Kommata, a region of southern Galatia, before returning homeward. He was shadowed by Christopher, the *domestikos of the scholae* (possibly Basil's son in law), whose movements seem to have been unknown to the ill-prepared Chrysocheir. As our sources have it, the Paulicians reached Bathyryax around nightfall and set up camp, whereupon a dispute broke out in the Byzantine ranks between the Charsianon and Armeniakon forces, both of which sought to demonstrate their greater valour in the coming encounter. With much of the army clamouring for a fight, the generals relented and dispatched a hand-picked force to take the Paulicians unawares before dawn, while the bulk of the army remained to guard the camp. Even the unexpected appearance of the vanguard was enough to precipitate a general rout among their startled foe and Chrysocheir himself fled, but was soon overtaken by his pursuers. This portion of the account merits recounting because it reveals some of the interpersonal ties that developed between Romans and Paulicians through the practice of taking prisoners. Genesios' version, which I quote here, seems truer to its source than the *Vita*:

> As for Chreisocheir, he sought refuge in flight taking with him a few of his soldiers. But Poullades caught up with him. He had this celebrated name because he always wore a felt cap. He had once been a prisoner

115 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:36–37, pp. 86–87. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 108–110. His end is also described in much briefer terms by al-Ṭabarī, who notes the death of one Khuraskhāris in Byzantine territory in 871/72. The translator Waines does not identify this figure with Chrysocheir, but the link had already been made by Lemerle. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul*, vol. 36, p. 142; Lemerle, "L'histoire," p. 102.

> in Tephrike and had become quite friendly with Chreisocheir. When he saw the latter, he recognized him and called out loudly, "O Strategoi! O Domestikos of the Scholai! Come here!" Chreisocheir left and said, "O wretched Poullades! What harm have I done you? To the contrary, I have done many things to help you. Go away, and do not try to stop me." The other man replied, "I know, Chreisocheir, that you have done many good things for me and I pray to my Savior God that on this day I may repay you." Chreisocheir was on horseback and came up against a ditch across which his horse refused to jump. He thus paid less attention to Poullades and looked ahead, trying not to fall into the ditch. And Poullades struck him from behind with his spear, under his armpit. The force of the blow alarmed Chreisocheir's horse, which threw him to the ground. Then, his most trusted attendant, whose name was Diakonitzes, dismounted (whom Leo, the revered Emperor, appointed mensourator, as it is called in the language of the Romans, after he had abandoned for the better the loathsome religion of the Paulicians).[116] This man took Chreisocheir's head and placed it in his lap trying to offer him some relief. The Strategoi found him thus and, cutting off Chreisocheir's head, immediately sent it to the Lord Basil, crowned by God, as a gift.[117]

For a figure who had plagued the cities of Asia Minor in the preceding years, Chrysocheir has a quasi-tragic end that surprisingly evokes some sympathy. He might, it is implied, have escaped amid the general pandemonium had he not been recognized by a former prisoner who, despite being treated well in his confinement, unsaddled his former captor in his distraction, mortally wounding him in the process. In the *Vita Basilii*, Basil goes on to exact his revenge upon the mutilated remains, which the source considers a fitting epilogue to the affair of Chrysocheir and Tephrikē; a combination which once again predominates over any semblance of a broader Paulician identity.[118]

Beyond the narrative presentation of Chrysocheir's final moments, there is still much of interest in this account. Even though the taking of prisoners was a common Paulician tactic for much of the century, there are precious few allusions to it. Prisoners of repute were generally well treated so that a sizable ransom could be exacted and this certainly seems to have been true

116 Paulicians is the translation given by Kaldellis. The text actually reads Paulianists, who correspond to the followers of Paul of Samosata.

117 Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:37, p. 88. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, pp. 109–110.

118 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 41; 43, pp. 148–149; 155–159.

in Poullades' case. The passage does not state how Poullades was ransomed, but in the case of Karbeas' captives at Samosata the prisoners wrote home to arrange payment.[119] The exchange between Poullades and Chrysocheir is an interesting one, since it demonstrates the very different experiences of captor and captive: Chrysocheir may believe that he has treated Poullades well, yet the latter is still bent on retribution. Byzantines were free to take their own captives in this engagement, since the *Vita Basilii* states Poullades took prisoners, including Diakonitzes, but it seems that they were not subsequently ransomed.[120] Judging by Diakonitzes' later fate, they were offered the possibility of reconciliation or conversion, and, although the least repentant may have been imprisoned, the draconian sentence of punishing Manichaeans with the sword seems to have been quietly forgotten. Mercy never seems to have been a consideration in Chrysocheir's case given the destruction he had wrought in previous years. As for Diakonitzes, his appointment as *mensourator* in Leo VI's reign shows that Paulicians could swiftly integrate themselves into Roman society. Genesios states that he converted before doing so but it is unclear whether this conversion was genuine or only skin deep. We find Diakonitzes leading "a troop of men who traced their religion back to Mani" under Nikephoros Phokas in the Langobardia thema in 885/86.[121] That their heterodoxy was still recognized implies that little effort had been made regarding conversion, particularly because there was no attempt to break up the company, but it is equally possible that their Manichaean past was invoked purely as a regimental identity. It is noteworthy that Diakonitzes' troop was allowed to retain its unity, despite a longstanding period of opposition to the empire. It suggests that their reconciliation was relatively swift and untroubled, as in the case of the Khurramiyya, whom Theophilos attempted to acculturate and only disbanded after their loyalty had been undermined by their alleged proclamation of Theophobos as emperor. Romans could evidently coexist with Paulicians (and other heterodox minorities) when circumstances allowed.

The outcome of the battle of Bathyryax is in many respects indicative of the dangers which raiding entailed when the empire was able to concentrate its manpower and bring it to bear on the invading army, particularly when the latter was laden with plunder. Chrysocheir's fate mirrored that of 'Amr al-Aqṭa'

119 Theophanes Continuatus I-IV, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*, 4:23, pp. 252–253.

120 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 43, pp. 156–157.

121 This is the conventional date, but note the objections given by Tougher, who favours a date between 886 and 888. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 71, pp. 244–245; Shaun Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886–912): Politics and People* (Leiden, 1997), p. 204.

a decade before; shadowed on enemy soil, he was swiftly outnumbered, outmanoeuvred, and forced to fight in unfavourable circumstances. The primary difference was that 'Amr's forces put up a desperate last stand whereas the Paulicians, who were perhaps less suited to conventional warfare, broke almost immediately. Bathyryax is the only Paulician defeat known to us, but it was a decisive one. We know of no other leader following Chrysocheir and it is probable that many senior figures fell or were captured alongside him. The manpower available to the Paulicians is unknown, but it seems that they lacked the necessary reserves to recover from a defeat on this scale. As noted above, Chrysocheir's belligerence may have stemmed from a position of weakness and subsequent events imply that the Paulician presence in the east was fatally undermined by his demise.

Such is the importance of Chrysocheir in contemporary accounts that it has often been assumed that Tephrikē fell soon after his death, but the capture of the Paulicians' most famous stronghold is not described in any source, whether Greek or Arabic.[122] The most likely eventuality is that it held out until 878/79. As observed above, Lemerle is almost certainly correct in associating the campaigns described by al-Ṭabarī and the *Vita Basilii*, in which case Basil followed up the victory at Bathyryax in the following year by campaigning against Tephrikē, Sozopetra, Samosata, and Melitene. The death of Chrysocheir did not, however, trigger a resurgence in Byzantine campaigning in the east and, so far as we know, it is only in 876 that imperial forces advanced once more. The objective on this occasion was Melitene, but our only source, Symeon the Logothete, merely notes that Basil killed a considerable number of the enemy and took many captives.[123]

Several years later, Basil and his subordinates marched forth in a campaigning season that would be crowned by a triumph for the emperor and his son Constantine. This triumph, which is described in an appendix to the *De ceremoniis*, was celebrated for victories at Germanikeia and Tephrikē.[124] Although the specifics of these victories are not noted, it seems that we have here our only allusion to the fall of Tephrikē. Since Constantine died on 3 September 879 and our surviving accounts of the campaign are placed immediately before this event, these victories should be placed in either 878, the date favoured by

122 The conflation of Chrysocheir's death and the fall of Tephrikē was relatively frequent before Lemerle's study, despite the fact that Vasiliev had already argued that the latter should be placed in 879. See, for instance, Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, p. 129.

123 Symeon the Logothete, *Chronicon*, 132:15, p. 265.

124 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, vol. 1, pp. 498–502. See also McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 152–157; 212–230.

Lemerle, or 879, as argued by Alexander Vasiliev, Nicolas Oikonomidès, and Warren Treadgold among others.[125] Once more, the sources do not agree on a precise date and our reconstruction is further complicated by the contemporary siege of Syracuse (877–878) by the Aghlabids, who had for some decades aimed at the annexation of Sicily from their powerbase across the straits in Ifrīqiya.[126] Syracuse finally fell after a nine-month siege on 21 May 878 amid much looting and bloodshed and it is generally considered unlikely that Basil set out on campaign while the siege remained in progress. As a result, 879 is the date usually preferred, although Lemerle has argued that placing the campaign in the previous year may explain why it achieved relatively little if Basil's departure was delayed by events in the west. These difficulties complicate our understanding of the expedition, which targeted an ambitious number of sites across the mountainous stretch of the frontier from the Kilikian Gates to Melitene, but achieved little lasting gains, aside from the conjectural fall of Tephrikē.[127]

We possess two notable accounts of this campaign, those of Symeon the Logothete and the *Vita Basilii*. Both are true to form: Symeon's version is brief in the extreme, whereas the *Vita* once more provides a full and convincing account which must have drawn on contemporary sources.[128] Although the latter does not mention the fall of Tephrikē, immediately after its description of the campaign it notes that the fortress' power waned and then disappeared altogether around this time, probably, as we shall see, through the actions of Basil's subordinates. The first target of the main thrust, which was led by Basil (and Constantine, who seems to have been alongside him throughout), was Loulon, a fortress which had been one of the main Islamic staging posts for invasion in earlier times and had been contested between the powers more recently.[129] When this was taken the neighbouring fortress of Melou surrendered. Both sites lay in the parts of Kappadokia most exposed to Islamic raiding, where Basil concentrated his activity, but it is also clear that the emperor's

125 Lemerle, "L'histoire," pp. 104–108; Alexander A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes: T.2 La dynastie Macédonienne* (*867–959*), trans. Henri Grégoire, Marius Canard (Brussels, 1950), pp. 86–94; Nicolas Oikonomidès, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des 9. et 10. siècles: introduction, texte, traduction et commentaire* (Paris, 1972), p. 350, n. 355; Treadgold, *A History of Byzantine State*, pp. 458; 944, n. 25.

126 Alex Metcalfe, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy* (Edinburgh, 2009), pp. 27–28.

127 Anderson, "The Road-System," pp. 34–36.

128 Symeon the Logothete, *Chronicon*, 132:17, p. 266. A parallel version is found in Pseudo-Symeon. See Pseudo-Symeon, 15, in *Theophanes continuatus, Ioannes Caminiata, Symeon Magister, Georgius monachus*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, 1838), p. 692.

129 For the campaign, see Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 46–49, pp. 162–177.

generals were active in the Paulician lands to the north-east, where the *Vita* describes the capture of "the Manichaean city, Katabatala," which has not been precisely located.[130] As for Basil himself, he marched through Kallipolis, Padasia, and then the mountain passes to Germanikeia, whose inhabitants retreated behind their walls. After devastating the surrounding countryside, he advanced to Adata and subjected it to much the same treatment, although in this case the *Vita* states that a concerted attempt was made on the fortifications.[131] When this venture proved futile, he returned to his own territory. Upon reaching Caesarea, he received news of his subordinates' successes, which included a wealth of booty and captives from the Tarsites and Manichaeans. The fight had evidently been taken to the Paulicians in his absence and, since Basil's triumph was celebrated for victories at Germanikeia and Tephrikē, it seems that the latter had been taken, or at least reduced to insignificance, by his subordinates. That this is so is suggested by the fact, noted above, that the *Vita* then states that the threat of Tephrikē waned around this time, with the Emirate of Tarsus taking its place as the empire's predominant enemy in the east.[132] That the fate of the most celebrated Paulician stronghold goes unremarked is somewhat surprising, but may owe much to the vagaries of source survival, since the *Vita* notes the fate of many less significant locales if Basil was in the vicinity, but is less well informed on the doings of his underlings. Regardless of all of this, it seems apparent that Tephrikē's importance had diminished markedly since Chrysocheir's day. It is the fall of the leader and not the city which marks the most fitting end to the Paulicians' ascendancy.

Their apogee was at times a spectacular one, but it was also fleeting and owed more to favourable circumstances and the fortunes of its leaders than any great degree of institutional or ideological sophistication. Its success could not outlive any decline in its raiding activity, particularly once Islamic support had ground to a halt. This was not a state in any sense of the term,

130 As noted by Ramsay, who believed that it should be located in the region of the other main Paulician sites. William M. Ramsay, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (London, 1890), pp. 342–343. Bryer's conjecture that the site lay further east in the environs of Mananalis should be disregarded. Anthony Bryer, "Excursus on Mananalis, Samosata of Armenia and Paulician Geography," in *Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, eds. Anthony Bryer, Judith Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), p. 84.

131 The *Vita* gives Basil's siege of Adata a prophetic tint, since it claims that the city's inhabitants had been told the city would not fall to Basil, but to another emperor named Constantine, who turned out to be Constantine VII, the purported author of the *Vita*. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 48, pp. 170–175.

132 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Vita Basilii*, 50, pp. 178–179.

but an ephemeral politico-military formation that was only tenable as long as Islamic forces held the ascendancy on the eastern frontier and had the will and capacity to prop up their allies. The territories in question were not populated homogeneously by Paulicians, but by a disparate mix that reflected the area's stateless character and its location at the crossroads of different ethnocultural zones. Only a single Paulician defeat is mentioned in our sources, but it was sufficient to prompt a decline from which they would never recover. This inherent weakness should not, however, lead us to lose sight of the remarkable upturn in their fortunes. The spectre of retribution must have seemed an unlikely prospect when Karbeas' father stood on the scaffold, but retaliation lasted decades, at times in concert with the standards of Islam, at times striking at the heart of the empire alone.

The single greatest disappointment in Paulician studies is that we lack the testimony to assess how the faith of the *didaskaloi* mapped onto these tumultuous events. For the second half of the 9th century we have only a single notable – and unreliable – witness, Peter of Sicily, who paints their legacy at Tephrikē in rather ossified terms: only two of Sergios' *synekdemoi*, Basil and Zosimos, remained from the era of their master.[133] No new developments are noted. But Peter, of course, never travelled to Tephrikē, so a rather more nuanced picture is likely than that he conveys here. Sergios' career was a highpoint of Paulician ingenuity in terms of missionary activity and scriptural sophistication and it seems unthinkable that this abated so swiftly after him, particularly against a backdrop as eventful as Theodora's persecutions and Karbeas' flight. In their very different ways, both Sergios and Chrysocheir traversed much of Asia Minor: the former with his Gospels; the latter with his sword. The difference appears stark, but it is perhaps overplayed; Sergios' followers were liable to take up arms, whereas, in al-Mas'ūdī's terms at least, Chrysocheir could qualify as a patriarch. Still, there are a wealth of unanswered questions. One of the most notable, upon which our sources never shed any light, is whether a Paulician faith that spread across the empire at the beginning of the century continued to win adherents in this new era of conflict and, if it did, the mechanisms that Byzantine authorities used to combat it. Another is whether the internal disagreements and schisms which characterised earlier Paulician communities continued during the era of Karbeas and Chrysocheir, or whether Argaous and Tephrikē acted as a physical core around which a more united movement coalesced. A cloud of obscurity also remains over what befell those who remained in these centres as the

133 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 188, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 92.

Byzantine grip tightened around them. Did they flee eastward into Armenia as many scholars have assumed, to inspire the burgeoning T'ondrakec'i, or was their flight multidirectional as Qudāma and Genesios suggest?[134]

The Romans exulted in their victory over the Paulicians for some time. Most indicative is a manuscript comprising a collection of Manichaean works, prefaced by a laudatory poem to Basil I, that was perhaps presented to the emperor by Photios soon after his return to the patriarchal throne in 877.[135] The poem wishes Basil success against the "friends and initiates of Mani," thereby suggesting that Tephrikē had not yet fallen, but the writing was surely on the wall by this point. The collection, which includes works of Didymos of Alexandria and Alexander of Lykopolis, suggests that Byzantines primarily met the ideological challenge that the Paulicians posed by copying older works, or composing new variants of texts within the anti-Manichaean genre.[136] Photios' own sermons against Manichaeism, which follow the *Brief History* in the manuscript tradition, fall into the latter category. These norms of textual production, together with the lack of surviving historical works from this period, explain why we have little contemporary allusions to Paulicians during the latter half of the 9th century. Photios certainly continued to consider their defeat important, referring to God's banishment of the Manichaeans in his preface to the *Eisagoge*, a work conventionally dated between 879 and 886.[137] Aside from the presence of Diakonitzes and his retinue within Byzantine ranks around the same time, the Paulicians disappear from our sources until the following century. In the Byzantine imagination, their threat, whether understood in military or religious terms, had passed by the end of the 9th century, but that threat, real or imagined, would resurface once more when the legacy of Basil I became an ideological crux of the rule of his grandson.

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134 For links with the T'ondrakec'i, see Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 138–141; 146–147; Vrej Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement: Religious Movements in the Armenian Church from the Fourth to the Tenth Centuries* (London, 1987), pp. 53–54. Genesios states that after the fall of Tephrikē many of its inhabitants were reconciled with the empire, whereas others fled to Syria. Genesios, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, 4:34, p. 85. Translation: *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, p. 107.

135 The manuscript is *Laurentianus IX*, 23. On the poem, see Athanasios Markopoulos, "An Anonymous Laudatory Poem in Honor of Basil I," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992), pp. 225–232; Gyula Moravcsik, "Sagen und Legenden über Kaiser Basileios I," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 15 (1961), pp. 63–64.

136 For the latter and some initial thoughts on the *Laurentianus* manuscript, see Alexander of Lykopolis, *Alexandri Lycopolitani contra Manichaei opiniones disputatio*, ed. Augustus Brinkmann (Leipzig, 1895).

137 Willem J. Aerts et al, "The Prooimion of the Eisagoge: Translation and Commentary," *Subseciva Groningana* 7 (2001), pp. 96–97; 104, n. 3; 135–138.

Epilogue

By the time the forger now known as Peter of Sicily compiled or repurposed the *History of the Paulicians* in the middle of the 10th century, the subject of his opus had not been a geopolitical concern within Romanía for decades. Even in the more modest setting of proselytising, few traces of Paulician activity had come to light. One notable instance stands out: sometime in the first half of the century the ascetic Paul the Younger combatted their presence in Kibyrrhaeotis and Miletus by successfully imploring an unnamed emperor to relocate them elsewhere. Whether this reflects a genuine concern with Paulicians at the time, or whether the anxiety properly belongs to the 11th century, when the life was written, is unclear.[1] Whatever the truth, the Paulicians slunk into obscurity after the fall of Tephrikē and little is heard of them during a period when the empire continued to gain ground in the east. Perhaps this silence is illusory: few historical works survive from the period and when these begin to surface once more in Constantine VII's reign, the Paulicians return in full force, albeit not always under that name. As the mythology of the Macedonian dynasty became progressively more refined in the *Basileion*, the *Vita Basilii*, and *Theophanes Continuatus* I-IV, understandings of the Paulicians developed alongside them, becoming increasingly central to narratives of Basil I's reign. The extent of Constantine VII's involvement in this intellectual project is unclear, but, as Demetrios of Kyzikos tells us, the emperor was sufficiently engaged with heresy to debate with both the Paulicians and the Athinganoi.

How many iterations the *History* had gone through by Constantine's sole reign is also unclear, but it seems most likely that a compilation this idiosyncratic had a long gestation period, during which its form and purpose were adapted several times. It would soon be tailored to the appearance of a heretical menace that troubled the Tsar of Bulgaria, although it ultimately almost disappeared amid the unpredictable caprices of textual preservation, in contrast with its derivate texts, which fared more favourably. Yet the importance of the *History* lies not in the machinations of 10th-century palaces or the complexities of Bulgaro-Byzantine relations, but in the preservation of genuine Paulician material from the movement's missionary heyday in the early decades of the 9th century. As a means of furthering his goals, Peter of Sicily edited, abbreviated, and polemicised this, in the process stripping it of much of its context and religious resonance. Still, due to the faithfulness of Byzantine

1 *Vita Pauli Iunioris*, 45, ed. Iacobo Sirmondi, *Analecta Bollandiana* 11 (1892), p. 156.

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norms of textual editing and the heresiologist's predilection for convicting a heretic from their own words, the remaining material retains much of its narrative logic, its phraseology, and its scriptural echoes. Most importantly of all, it holds a religious core which contradicts the Byzantine smear campaign. Almost uniquely in the annals of medieval history, Peter of Sicily allowed the Paulicians to speak on something like their own terms. This voice is now finally being heard.

The implications are considerable: the Paulicians of 9th-century Asia Minor were not adoptionists or dualists, but largely conventional Christians devoted to the apostle Paul, the memory of whose churches, disciples, and letters infused meaning into a new era of missionary zeal. By the time of their encounter with Byzantine state and church, they had a hierarchy of their own, whose legitimacy suffered as hostility turned to persecution and a mythos developed that dichotomised their downtrodden Christian community with the malign persecutors of the Roman Empire, who had likewise hounded Paul and his followers centuries before. Underlying all of this, although only sporadically appearing in our sources, is the Paulician belief in participation and immersion within, or even ordination by, the Holy Spirit, whose agency retained the characteristically enthusiastic and communal emphases articulated by Paul. This was not the religion of the old Paylikeank' of Armenia, whatever that may construed to be, not some unseen vestige of Marcionism, nor the faith of the Manichaean elect and hearers who had been chased from the empire in Justinian's day. It was not rooted in the formative disputes of the 3rd and 4th centuries, but a contemporary Christianity that thrived through being of its own time and place. It was also not a static faith: the Paulicians retained a memory of an era when only the Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline letters were admissible, but by the time of their most famous *didaskalos* Sergios-Tychikos the Old Testament was read by many adherents and new works, themselves redolent of the apostolic age, were added to their canon.

This was a period of religious vitality and dissension whose motive forces we can only glimpse imperfectly in our sources, even if the course of events suggests an exceptional commitment to a burgeoning faith. The mythical beginnings are not propitious: a Pauline-inspired community undergoes a series of peripatetic misadventures in the borderlands between Armenia and Romanía, vainly battling the twin dangers of oppression from without and schism from within. The latter seems a source of both weakness and strength; a propensity that sowed division and attracted unwanted attention, but also one that promoted evolution and expansion by making the community receptive to ideas and talent from outside. The most notable example of this, the *didaskalos* Sergios-Tychikos, embodied the vigour and the contradictions

which were inherent to the movement. Born among the orthodox at Tabia, he would become the spearhead for the greatest expansion of the Paulician faith, supplanting the heir of his predecessor and proselytising indefatigably, but his irresolute response to Byzantine persecution alienated the martial instincts of many. His successors were of a different ilk, and there are doubts about whether their communities were Paulician in the same sense that Sergios' were, but they still typified the same tireless verve. At the climax of the iconomachy, Karbeas was among the foremost subordinates of the general of the Anatolikon thema, but the persecution of his fellow adherents turned his loyalties, such that the following years would take him to the court of the caliph at Sāmarrā, pit him against his former comrades while relieving Samosata, and potentially even lead him to his grave. His nephew Chrysocheir looked west rather than east, but was equally driven in his enmity; at one time or another, he could exasperate his nominal ally Photios, the greatest intellectual force of the day, raid across the breadth of Asia Minor, and haughtily demand the cession of the empire's heartlands from Basil I, even if his final defeat and flight were inglorious in comparison. We are, unfortunately, often ill-informed about the motives and beliefs underpinning the above, but it is clear that this was an era when the Gospels and Pauline letters permeated, inspired, and impelled the lived experience of many, imbuing it with a purpose and vitality that has rarely been matched since.

Without doubt, the most eye-catching assertion advanced in the preceding pages, the full credit for which properly belongs to Claudia Ludwig, is that the Paulicians of our era did not give the heavenly Father a demiurgic rival.[2] The fallout from this finding opens new lines of inquiry in the case of the Paulicians themselves, but the ramifications become more pronounced when we look beyond them. Their role as the harbingers of medieval Christian dualism has now been seriously undermined as, arguably, has the relevance of the paradigm itself. The aftershocks might be felt more keenly in the case of the Bogomils, whose proximity to the Paulicians in both space and time have often been considered the roots of their dualism, although, as noted beforehand, the links have traditionally been downplayed somewhat owing to the absence of asceticism among the Paulicians.[3] The two coexisted in the Balkans, where the Paulician presence certainly predated John I Tzimiskes' relocation of them

2 Claudia Ludwig, "Wer hat was in welcher Absicht wie beschreiben? Bemerkungen zur Historia des Petros Sikeliotes über die Paulikianer," *Varia 2 Ποικιλα byzantina* 6 (1987), pp. 149–227.

3 Bernard Hamilton, ed., "Introduction," in *Hugh Eteriano: Contra Patarenos*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton, Sarah Hamilton, (Leiden, 2004), pp. 33–37.

to Philippopolis *c.*970–972, even if a date as early as Constantine V's reign is untenable. Which, if either, of the two movements underlies the correspondence between Theophylaktos Lekapenos and Peter I remains unclear, but from this time onward heresy became a pressing concern in Bulgaria. In this era it is difficult to distinguish between the two, but as time goes on the implication becomes clear that the Bogomils comprised the greater menace, particularly in terms of proselytization, which is surprisingly poorly attested among the Paulicians beyond Sergios' ministry. By the middle of the 11th century, the well-travelled monk Euthymios of the Peribleptos could confidently note that the Paulicians' heresy was obvious, hereditary, and no-one could be harmed by it.[4] Their perfidy was another question: Alexios I Komnenos, who had to contend with their disappearing act following the Dyrrhachium campaign of 1081 and Traulos' intrigues among the Pechenegs, may not have agreed with Euthymios' assessment.[5] Their status as the empire's greatest heterodox threat may have been supplanted by the Bogomils, but they remained as resourceful and unruly as ever.

Once the dualism of the Paulicians is unmasked as a fabrication, the primary commonality linking them and the Bogomils are the identification strategies of Byzantine heresiologists. The production of our forged texts in middle of the 10th century suggests that these strategies were evolving at the same period that concerns with heresy became pronounced in Bulgaria. It may be, as I speculated in the introduction, that the Paulician-Bogomil link is not impelled by doctrinal continuity between the two, but is rather a construct imposed by the Byzantine Church, as in the case of the Manichaean-Paulician connection we have now seen to be erroneous. If so, Byzantine intellectuals were properly speaking the founders of medieval Christian dualism. There are, however, other eventualities, including the possibility that Paulician belief adopted dualist characteristics in some settings, particularly in cases when it was in more intensive contact with the discourses of religious power and identity politics than seems possible in Sergios' era, or in the far flung bastions of Argaous and Tephrikē, which were ideologically even more isolated from

4 Euthymios of the Peribleptos, *Epistula*, in *Die Phundagiagiten: ein Beitrag zur Ketzergeschichte des byzantinischen Mittelalters*, ed. Gerhard Ficker (Leipzig, 1908), p. 63. Partial English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 158.

5 For Dyrrhachium, see Anna Komnene, *Annae Comnenae Alexias*, 5:3, eds. Diether R. Reinsch, Athanasios Kambylis (Berlin/New York, 2001), pp. 146–149. English translation: *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth A.S. Dawes (London, 1928), p. 120. For Traulos, see Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, 6:2–4; 6:14, pp. 173–174; 199–202. Translation: *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*, pp. 139–143; 164–167.

Constantinople than geographically. In my view, this possibility is a remote one, but if anything should have become apparent in the preceding pages it is that heterodoxies evolved and repositioned themselves due to intercourse with outside forces. This engagement was rarely direct: Paulicians remained unaware of or uninterested in the allegations of their enemies and instead constructed their image of them as a means of furthering their own ideological needs. The Romans, of course, used analogous othering techniques. All of this makes it difficult to determine whether a dualist creed ever emerged, directly or otherwise, from Paulician-Byzantine interaction. Yet this and other matters might be greatly elucidated by a more searching examination of the formative period of Bogomil history, the prospective Paulician influence upon it, and the impact of the respective Byzantine and Bulgar gazes.

If nothing else, there is little prospect that the Bogomils shared the faith of the Paulicians in the era of heresy, persecution, and warfare; the era when scattered refuges on the upper Euphrates embraced teachers who cloaked themselves in the stylings of Acts and the Pauline Letters. As our sources have it, at Mananalis, Kibossa, and shadowy Episparis, the disciples Silvanos, Titos, Timothy, and Epaphroditos preached again in different incarnations; at Mananalis, to Achaeans who had never seen the Corinthian gulf; at Kibossa to Macedonians who had never felt the Aegean breeze. This was an age when those who called themselves Christians feared duress in the guise of Roman arms, when the immanence of the Spirit joined communities of believers from the Armenian borderlands to the Anatolian plateau. Under the upstart Sergios-Tychikos the faith blossomed further, infiltrating a tumultuous Constantinople then quaking before the advance of the Bulgar hordes. For the likes of Theophanes the Confessor and Michael I, this neo-Manichaean menace merited nothing less than subjugation by the sword, but Roman opinion was not unanimous: Theodore the Stoudite unfailingly opposed a course of action which he insisted tainted the church. Though somewhat more pessimistic, Photios too dangled the prospect of reconciliation, whereas Basil I, whose reign suffered their depredations worse than most, was also quick to offer pardon. It was during the latter's rule that the Paulicians lived their defiant last hurrah in the mountain fastness of Tephrikē, when Chrysocheir railed and raided as the emirates of the *thughūr* slunk into obscurity around him. The Byzantine counterattack was swift: he fell at Bathyryax and his fortresses would linger but a little longer. So ended the apostleship at arms, an era when echoes of the Pauline Spirit found new resonance at a distance of eight centuries.

APPENDIX 1

The Dating Frameworks of the *History of the Paulicians*

Previous studies of the Paulicians have largely remained faithful to the chronology established by the *History of the Paulicians*, perhaps unsurprisingly considering that this coheres well with the known parameters of our period.[1] There are, however, good reasons to question the reliability of the *History*'s account, primarily because of the implausible longevity it attributes to Paulician leaders. As noted in the introduction, the source posits that seven Paulician leaders headed the movement over the period *c.*655–835 when a score or more would be appropriate. Lifespans of this duration, which have only recently been attained among British monarchs and Japanese emperors who have benefitted from the advances of modern medicine, hardly deserve credence in the case of an ill-regarded schismatic movement of the medieval period. Indications therefore suggest that the surviving account is mytho-historical at best, but a closer examination of the chronology hints that it was invented by Peter of Sicily himself, who probably imposed temporal confines upon a source which originally lacked them. The best indicator of this is the formulaic dates found in the *History*, where numbers are generally given in multiples of three, with the number thirty commonly attested, thereby suggesting a generational framework of some kind. This was already noted in the 19th century by Ter Mkrttschian, but was disregarded by later students of the topic.[2]

In fact, it transpires that these figures fit within a numerical framework that encompasses the entirety of the *History*, thereby strongly intimating that Peter of Sicily manufactured its chronology. Number symbolism permeates many passages of the *History* and it seems most likely that Peter took the motif from either the Paulicians themselves, or the *Treatise*, both of which invoke the significance of the numbers six and seven, as in the case of the six Paulician *didaskaloi* and seven Paulician churches.[3]

1 Paul Lemerle, "L'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure d'après les sources grecques," *Travaux et mémoires* 5 (1973), p. 84.

2 Karapet Ter Mkrttschian, *Die Paulikianer im byzantinischen Kaiserreiche und verwandte ketzerische Erscheinungen in Armenien* (Leipzig, 1893), p. 17.

3 *Treatise*, 5–7, ed. and trans. Charles Astruc, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 82–84. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), pp. 93–94; Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 163, ed. Denise Papachryssanthou, trans. Jean Gouillard, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 60–61. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 88.

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Since the number seven is conventionally regarded as a holy number, Peter of Sicily symbolically rejects the claims of the Paulicians to sanctity by denying them the right to this number in the *History*, in the process substituting it with the number six.[4] This is seen most clearly in the dating framework, whose import becomes much clearer when read in conjunction with Pseudo-Photios' *Brief History*. The dates given by the *History* are as follows:

Constantine-Silvanos (600 years after Paul)			27 years
Interregnum			3 years
Symeon-Titos			3 years
Gegnesios-Timothy			30 years
Joseph-Epaphroditos			30 years
	Total to date	93 years	
Sergios-Tychikos (800 years after Paul)			34 years

The formulaic nature of the *History*'s dates, with the emphasis on multiples of three, can be clearly seen in the above, but the true significance lies in the overall framework.[5] The dates show that Sergios-Tychikos assumed leadership of the Paulicians almost a century (93 years) after Constantine-Silvanos, who himself lived six hundred years after Paul. However, the *History* places the last *didaskalos* two hundred years after the first. This discrepancy clearly arises from Peter of Sicily's refusal to apply the holy number seven to the Paulicians: not only does he omit the reference to seven hundred years which his chronology warrants, but he also introduces a seven-year discrepancy into the equation. Thus, in the only instance Peter applies the number seven to the Paulicians in the *History*, he does so in its absence, thereby

4 Peter identifies six key errors of the Paulicians, which he addressed in the six sermons that originally followed his work. See Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 36–45, pp. 18–23. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 72–74. For the reference to six sermons (which is omitted in the *Christian Dualist Heresies* translation), see Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 93, pp. 40–41. The patriarch of Constantinople refers six similar questions to Gegnesios. See Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 115–120, pp. 46–49. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 80–81. Peter also notes the names of six of Sergios' disciples. Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 182, pp. 66–67. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 91.

5 The exception, of course, is Sergios-Tychikos' thirty-four years, but this is because he is a securely attested historical figure, unlike the others.

symbolically denying their claims to sanctity once more. The truth of this is crucially confirmed by Pseudo-Photios, who recognized Peter's numerical scheme and amended it, instead placing Sergios-Tychikos at the logical time of seven hundred years after Paul.[6]

As a result, it seems certain that the dates found in the *History of the Paulicians* were invented by Peter of Sicily, rather than deriving from the *Didaskalie*. Moreover, it appears that the *Didaskalie* had no historical framework whatsoever and that Peter also added the references to Roman emperors in the text. The way several of these are named (notably "Constantine, the descendant of Herakleios" and "Justinian, the one who ruled after Herakleios") resemble contemporary Byzantine lists, whereas Theophanes too uses a method of dating emperors in respect to Herakleios.[7] Consequently, it would appear that the *Didaskalie* originally had very little in the way of a chronological framework, as is appropriate for a mytho-historical text composed for specific ideological reasons grounded in the early decades of the 9th century. There are other reasons that this makes perfect sense. Whether they believed it literally or figuratively, the Paulicians considered themselves followers of Paul, but never tried to establish a direct historical relationship with him. Their conception of time does not seem to have been contiguous, but rather figurative: it was most probably entwined with their affinity for the apostolic age and their wider symbolic universe. It can hardly have been imperially centred, particularly in this period when well-connected Byzantines with texts at their disposal often struggled to piece together a reliable chronology. The repercussions of all of this are quite marked: the timeline of Paulician history prior to the 9th century is seriously undermined, while the fact that Pseudo-Photios recognized Peter of Sicily's symbolic framework implies either that readings of this kind were not uncommon in Byzantine texts, or that the relationship between these heresiologies is even closer than commonly supposed.

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6 Pseudo-Photios, *Brief History*, 114, ed. Wanda Conus-Wolska, trans. Joseph Paramelle, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 160–161.

7 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 94; 111, pp. 40–41; 46–47. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 76; 79–80; *Chronographikon syntomon*, in *Nicephori archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica*, ed. Carl de Boor (Leipzig, 1880), p. 99; Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, ed. Carl de Boor, 2 vols, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1883), p. 341. English translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, eds. and trans. Cyril Mango, Roger Scott (Oxford, 1997), p. 475; Theophanes, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, p. 361. Translation: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 504.

APPENDIX 2

The Career of Sergios in the *History of the Paulicians*

One of the few instances in which I depart from Ludwig's magisterial study of the *Didaskalie* lies in her belief that the source originally incorporated an account of the career of Sergios-Tychikos. In her view, this account contained extracts of the *Letters of Sergios*, which had already been subsumed within the *Didaskalie* before it came to be used by the polemical tradition.[1] However, despite Sergios commissioning the text, he does not seem to have appeared in it, whereas it also seems that the *Didaskalie* and *Letters of Sergios* were discrete sources when Peter of Sicily consulted them. This is suggested by a number of points. Firstly, although Peter of Sicily explicitly alludes to his consultation of the *Letters of Sergios*, he never mentions a Paulician historical account that corresponds to the *Didaskalie*, thereby making it unlikely that the former had been incorporated within the latter.[2] Moreover, as noted in Chapter 3, the *Didaskalie* symbolically links the first four *didaskaloi* with one another as part of a cohesive scheme, which is opened and closed by the respective stoning episodes involving Constantine-Silvanos and Joseph-Epaphroditos. The narrative arc of the text is therefore resolved before Sergios' career, which suggests that it never referred to him.

The best reason to suppose that the *Didaskalie* made no mention of Sergios lies in the account itself, which Peter of Sicily seems to have pieced together from the *Letters* and several other sources. It is difficult to appraise exactly what these might have been, but it is possible that the copy of the Paulician texts Peter had before him contained an account of Sergios' career that was added after the fact. In the case of Sergios' early career, however, it seems that Peter has fabricated the account himself. Whereas the *Didaskalie* develops a wealth of symbolic meaning throughout, none of this is applied to Sergios. More importantly, the *History*'s account of his early years reflects unfavourably on him, which is hardly what we would expect from a text he commissioned. After a short account of his origins, the *History* proceeds to an account of his conversion by a female "Manichaean," who corrupts him and draws him into the heresy by undermining his ties with the institutional church and proffering a duplicitous and allegorical reading of the Gospels.[3] As a result, Sergios appears as an unlearned and unwitting

1 Claudia Ludwig, "Wer hat was in welcher Absicht wie beschreiben? Bemerkungen zur Historia des Petros Sikeliotes über die Paulikianer," *Varia 2 Ποικιλα byzantina* 6 (1987), pp. 194–209; 214.

2 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 43, ed. Denise Papachryssanthou, trans. Jean Gouillard, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 20–23. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 73.

3 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 138–146, pp. 52–55. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 84–85.

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convert who is beguiled into heresy. This is clearly not how he would wish to portray himself. A representative passage illustrates the passive and ineffectual portrayal of Sergios that arises from the text:

> The devil's disciple, in her cunning and corruption, said to him. 'I hear of you, *kyr* Sergius, that you are practiced in the knowledge of letters and education, and that in all ways you are a good man. Tell me then, why do you not read the holy gospels?' He was struck by her words, totally failing to recognize the hidden poison of evil in her, and said, 'It is not right for laymen like me to read them, but only for priests.'
>
> She said to him, 'It is not as you suppose, "for God shows no partiality."[4] "The Lord desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."[5] But since your priests are "peddlers of the word of God"[6] and conceal the mysteries of the gospel, that is why they do not read to you all that is written in them for you to hear, but read some parts and not others, so that you may not arrive at knowledge of the truth.
>
> For it is written that on that day some will say, "Lord, Lord, did we not cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works?"[7] And the king will answer, "Truly I say to you, I do not know you."[8] Search therefore and see, is this not how it is written? And there are some to whom the Lord will say, "I do not know you."[9]' Foolishly, in his ignorance Sergios was embarrassed and silent.[10]

Characteristically, Peter of Sicily then proceeds to give the orthodox interpretation of the relevant gospel passage, which he implies Sergios is incapable of understanding.[11] Returning to the extract, the Manichaean woman's scriptural quotations and lines of argument do not touch upon doctrinal matters, but instead focus on undermining the authority of the Byzantine Church. This is representative of the section as a whole, which spends most time delineating the conceptual boundaries of the church – its

4 Rom. 2:11.
5 1 Tim. 2:4.
6 2 Cor. 2:17.
7 Matt. 7:22.
8 Matt. 25:12.
9 Matt. 7:23.
10 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 138–140, pp. 52–53. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 84.
11 See especially Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 141–144, pp. 52–55. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 84–85.

likely source – rather than the Paulician community. The account as a whole reads as a warning to the orthodox, since it serves to denigrate Sergios rather than legitimate him. In other words, it most probably stems from Peter of Sicily, rather than the *didaskalos* himself. As for Sergios' one-time mentor, she subsequently disappears from the narrative, never to return.

In the following portion of the *History*, which focuses on the *Letters of Sergios* and Peter's interpretation thereof, there are no issues when it comes to determining the Paulician material, since Peter's quotations appear entirely faithful. His explicitly stated *modus operandi* is to convict Sergios by his own words.[12] He sticks to this approach rigidly, even to the extent of retaining emphases from the original source which contradict his own accusations. Sergios' protestation that he sought to stop his followers taking Roman prisoners, for instance, contradicts Peter's portrayal of him as an obdurate enemy of the empire.[13] The quotations similarly give no indication of the dualist influence Peter consistently alleges. His approach hinges upon pedantically twisting the sense of Sergios' words. Thus, when the latter notes that Paul founded the Church of Corinth while describing the Paulician churches, Peter criticizes him for downplaying the achievements of the apostle, since Paul founded many more.[14] Throughout this section, Peter devotes much attention to articulating the correct orthodox position and, as a result, there is continuity of approach from the preceding material, since the primary audience is the orthodox reader of Peter's era.

We then come to the most troublesome section: the narrative account of Sergios' career, which, although probably deriving from Paulician sources of some kind originally, contain a number of inconsistencies and unresolved matters. This is apparent from a quick sketch of the narrative, which centres on three main events: the conflict between Baanes and Sergios, the persecutions of Michael I and Leo V, and the death of Sergios. There are two interpretive difficulties throughout. Firstly, the followers of the respective Paulician leaders are characterised differently before and after the persecutions. Sergios' partisans, for instance, are characterised as Sergiotes beforehand and afterwards as *Astatoi* and *Kynochoritae*.[15] By contrast, Baanes' followers are characterised as Baaniotes before the persecutions, but Baanes and his followers are never

12 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 137, pp. 52–53. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 84.

13 Compare Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 132–133, pp. 50–53. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 83 with Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 157, pp. 58–59. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 87.

14 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 163–165, pp. 60–63. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 88.

15 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 172–178, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 89–90.

mentioned afterward.[16] Secondly, before the persecutions it is implied that Baanes' followers will be implicated in the death of Sergios, but Sergios is murdered by a lone individual with no connection to Baanes.[17] Since these difficulties centre upon the persecutions, it is possible that material of a different kind described the period beforehand and afterward. This is further suggested by the fact that Peter of Sicily derived his account of the persecutions by distorting *Theophanes Continuatus* IV or something very like it, thereby implying that he lacked a Paulician account in his source texts. None of the events described above could logically be attributed to the *Didaskalie*, which reaches its conclusion before this period, or the *Letters of Sergios*, the surviving extracts of which focus largely on pastoral matters.

It therefore seems most likely that this section of the account derives from unknown Paulician sources of some kind. While it cannot be discounted that Peter of Sicily invented this material, particularly since this is the period in which he seeks to place the transition from the religious to the militaristic phases of Paulician history, it seems unlikely that he has done so to a significant degree. This is because he continually seeks to defame Sergios, yet the surviving account clearly derived from the perspective of the Sergiote faction and is, for the most part, favourable to its leader. As noted above, Baanes and his followers are absent from the narrative besides instances that they are in conflict with Sergios' party. Baanes is also consistently called "the filthy" and it does not appear that Peter coined the moniker, since it is already attested by the *Treatise*.[18] Finally, if Peter of Sicily had fabricated this material, it is unlikely he would have done so in such an internally inconsistent fashion. As a result, it seems that he probably compiled some existing Paulician material into his own account. Quite what this additional material may have been is necessarily speculative, but a few possibilities deserve credence. The most likely eventuality is that a short biography of Sergios was appended to the *Didaskalie* and the *Letters of Sergios* by one of his followers in order to keep the record of the *didaskaloi* up to date. Otherwise, it is entirely possible that marginalia or excerpta appended to the main Paulician sources explain this material, which was probably brief and internally confused. The material itself is undeniably interesting as further evidence for the continued evolution of Paulician traditions about their past, albeit in a less sophisticated way than the works of Sergios' career.

16 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 170–172, pp. 62–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 89–90.

17 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 173; 179–180, pp. 64–65. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, pp. 90–91.

18 Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians*, 130, pp. 50–51. Translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies*, p. 83; *Treatise*, 5–6, ed. and trans. Charles Astruc, *Travaux et mémoires* 4 (1970), pp. 82–83. English translation: *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World: c.650–1450*, eds. Bernard Hamilton, Janet Hamilton (Manchester, 1998), p. 93.

Map of Eastern Asia Minor *c.*870

MAP 1 Eastern Asia Minor *c.*870

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